

Palestinians must be allowed a home. They must be allowed to rebuild, and we should be with them in that rebuild on the way to a two-state solution

Keir Starmer, UK Prime Minister



The issue of deportations from Gaza is not something that either the region or we would accept. Even thinking about it is wrong and absurd

Hakan Fidan, Turkish Foreign Minister



What he proposes is nonsense. The international community is made up of 193 states and this is the time to give the US what it has been looking for: Isolation

Francesca Albanese, UN special rapporteur



Gaza is their home. Gaza's death and destruction is a result of the government of Israel killing civilians by the thousands, often with US bombs

Paul O'Brien, Amnesty International US



World rejects Gaza takeover bid

Washington, USA - President Donald Trump's plan for the US to "take over" war-torn Gaza and create a 'Riviera of the Middle East' after resettling Palestinians elsewhere has sparked widespread criticism.

The shock move from Trump was swiftly condemned by international powers, with Saudi Arabia immediately rejecting the displacement of Palestinians, adding that it would not establish diplomatic relations with Israel - a long-term US foreign policy goal - without an independent Palestinian state.

Germany, Britain and France reiterated their stances for a two-state solution.

Far-right Israeli leaders applauded plans to permanently displace Palestinians from Gaza, while the Hamas group said it would 'pour oil on the fire'.

Trump's suggestion came at a White House news conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, where the president detailed a plan to build new settlements for Palestinians outside the Gaza Strip, and for the US to take "ownership" in re-developing the war-torn territory into the Riviera of the Middle



East. "The US will take over the Gaza Strip, and we will do a job with it too," Trump said. "We'll own it and be responsible for dismantling all of the dangerous unexploded bombs and other

weapons on the site, level the site, and get rid of the destroyed buildings, level it out, create an economic development that will supply unlimited numbers of jobs."

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said it would warrant "a serious violation of international law". He called for the United Nations to protect the Palestinian people and their in-

alienable rights, saying that what Trump wanted to do would be a serious violation of international law.

In response to Trump's comments, the French Foreign Min-

The Sultanate of Oman reiterated its firm stance against any attempts to displace residents of the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. Oman stressed that any plans aimed at transferring Palestinians from their territories constitute a clear violation of international law and UN resolutions. Such actions, the sultanate warned, pose a serious threat to security and stability in the region.

lution and a factor of major destabilisation for our close partners Egypt and Jordan as well as the entire region'.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, a staunch ally of Israel, said, "It is clear that Gaza - along with the West Bank and East Jerusalem - belongs to the Palestinians. They form the starting point for a future state of Palestine."

"Displacement of the Palestinian civilian population from Gaza would not just be unacceptable and against international law," the German minister said in a statement. "This would also lead to new suffering and new hatred." She said that there must not be a solution "over the heads of the Palestinians" and a negotiated two-state solution remains the only one.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said, "China has always believed that Palestinian rule is the basic principle of post-war governance in Gaza."

He reiterated Beijing's longstanding support for a two-state solution in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Agencies

SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES KUWAIT'S DEPUTY PM



H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received Sheikh Fahad Youssef Saud al Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior in the State of Kuwait, and his accompanying delegation in his office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison on Wednesday. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and discussed several matters of common concern

MHUP offers 5 sites for investment to boost logistics infrastructure

Our Correspondent Muscat

Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) has announced an initiative to develop transport yards by offering five strategically located land parcels for investment.

The plots, ranging from 6,700sqm to 7,500sqm, are located in Musandam, Dhofar, North Batinah and Dakhliyah. The initiative is part of the government's efforts to enhance the sultanate's logistics and land transport network, while encouraging private sector involvement in key infrastructure projects.

The transport yards are expected to play a vital role in improving the efficiency and accessibility of the country's land transport system. According to the MHUP, development of these facilities will support long-term sustainability and growth in the sector, benefiting residents and visitors alike.

Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology issued Oman's first licence for a transport yard in 2023, marking a significant milestone in regulating land transport facilities. Located in Liwa, North Batinah the licensed yard is spread over 30,000sqm and ac-



commodates over 250 buses, trucks and heavy vehicles.

The Liwa yard is strategically positioned to serve key logistical hubs, including Sohar Free Zone, Sohar Industrial City and Sohar Port. Its primary goal is to provide safe and well-equipped parking

for transport vehicles, reducing the need for truck parking in residential areas across the sultanate. The initiative not only improves urban aesthetics but also enhances safety standards.

The new transport yards will be located outside ports, industrial areas and free zones, offering temporary lodging for drivers and providing essential maintenance services. This supports operational efficiency while addressing the growing demands of Oman's transport sector.

The yards highlight Oman's commitment to modernising its urban and transport infrastructure.

03

MoE to introduce Chinese as elective subject

13

Salim al Balushi keeps a legacy afloat

Suhar's 50m flagpole set to become major landmark

Our Correspondent Suhar

North Batinah Municipality's Flag Square project in Suhar, slated to open in March, is nearing completion.

Spread over 9,000sqm, the landmark development will feature Oman's second tallest flagpole standing at 50m high. The project aims to enhance the Omani identity with its innovative design reflecting both the country's cultural heritage and modernity.

Flag Square will not only fly the national flag, symbolising patriotism and unity, but also offer community spaces such as two cafes, each covering 60sqm, lush



green gardens, fountains and open spaces for public engagement.

The project is in an advanced stage of completion with the flagpole already installed and key facilities taking shape. The final touches will include landscaping, fountain installation and aesthetic enhancements, ensuring

that it becomes a major cultural and recreational destination.

As part of its broader tourism efforts, North Batinah has seen substantial growth in its hospitality sector. By the end of 2024, the governorate had 58 hotel facilities, ranging from hotel apartments and guest houses to green lodges and tourist rest houses,

offering a total of 1,591 rooms and 395 apartments.

The governorate is also home to 20 historic forts and castles, many of which are now open for investment, contributing to the local economy and tourism.

According to a Ministry of Heritage and Tourism statement in 2024, 11 new licences were issued for hotel apartments and other tourism accommodations. Plans for 2025 include addition of two new hotels, three green lodges and three guest houses.

North Batinah's diverse offerings, including popular adventure activities like mountain walking and hiking, make it an attractive destination for both domestic and international visitors.

Oman-Britain Strategic Consultative Group meets

Muscat - Oman hosted the first meeting of the Oman-Britain Strategic Consultative Group for 2025 on Wednesday at Oman Across Ages Museum in Manah, Dakhliyah. Discussions centred on strengthening bilateral ties with focus on investment, business development and exploring opportunities for collaboration in key sectors.

The meeting addressed strategies to enhance investment cooperation between the two nations, targeting sectors such as scientific innovation, green energy and knowledge transfer. Participants also discussed ways to promote national identity and

effective communication, underscoring the importance of collaboration in these areas.

Omani officials and representatives from the UK, including government officials, private sector delegates and consultants, attended the meeting, reflecting the commitment of both nations to deepen economic, investment and developmental partnerships, building on their strong bilateral relations.

On the sidelines, workshops and technical sessions were held to explore sector-specific frameworks that align skills and competencies with labour market demands.

Sarooj Oasis in Sultan Haitham City goes on sale

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning officially launched sales for the highly anticipated Sarooj Oasis project, a landmark development in Sultan Haitham City valued at RO30mn, on Tuesday.

The integrated, eco-friendly community spread over 86,000sqm, will offer a harmonious blend of modern architecture and Omani cultural heritage.

Sarooj Oasis will be an expansive development featuring 210 residential units, designed to include a mix of luxurious villas and modern apartments.

The project will include a business centre and commercial spaces covering over 11,000sqm, with the total built-up area exceeding 65,000sqm.

Strategically located to offer scenic wadi views, the development will offer a serene yet connected lifestyle, making it an attractive choice for residents seeking both tranquility and urban convenience.

Sarooj Oasis will offer diverse residential options, catering to



various preferences and lifestyles. Althuraya Villas will offer luxurious living with panoramic views of the valley,

providing an exclusive retreat for those who value privacy and natural beauty.

Designed with sustainability

in mind, Ahed Villas will offer affordable luxury while embracing eco-friendly principles. Complementing these, modern apart-

ment buildings - situated close to vibrant commercial and cultural hubs - will ensure residents enjoy the best of

contemporary urban living.

Sarooj Oasis will be distinguished by a range of unique features enhancing its appeal as a modern, sustainable community. As a gated development, it'll offer privacy and security, creating a safe environment for families.

Valued at RO30mn, the integrated, eco-friendly community spread over 86,000sqm will offer a harmonious blend of modern architecture and Omani cultural heritage

The project emphasises an active, eco-friendly lifestyle through micromobility routes, including walkways and cycling paths that seamlessly connect residential areas with commercial and recreational spaces.

At the heart of the community, the Central Plaza will be designed for social interaction and

commercial activity, surrounded by retail spaces and accessible via sustainable transit routes.

Adding to the community's charm, a private central park nestled among the villas will serve as a green oasis perfect for recreation and family gatherings.

Inclusion of basement parking will enhance both convenience and the aesthetic appeal of the development, maintaining clean, uncluttered streetscapes. Families will also benefit from the availability of daycare facilities and proximity to leading public and private schools, ensuring a well-rounded, family-friendly environment.

More than just a residential project, Sarooj Oasis represents a dynamic, sustainable urban environment designed for modern living, working and investing, a press release stated. 'It offers unique ownership opportunities for both Omanis and expatriates, making it an ideal destination for those seeking a harmonious blend of traditional Omani heritage and contemporary design within a thriving, eco-conscious community.'



Interior Minister, Kuwait's Deputy PM discuss promoting cooperation

Muscat - H E Sayyid Hamoud Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, received in his office Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud al Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior in the State of Kuwait, on Wednesday.

The meeting reviewed the deep-rooted relations between the two countries and discussed ways of promoting cooperation

to serve joint interests. The two sides also exchanged views on matters of common concern.

The meeting was attended by Maj Gen Abdullah Ali al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Operations, H E Khalid Hilal al Busaidi, Undersecretary in Ministry of Interior, and Sayyid Khalifa al Murdas al Busaidi, Secretary-General

of Ministry of Interior.

From the Kuwaiti side, it was attended by H E Dr Mohammed Nassir al Hajri, Ambassador of Kuwait to Oman, Maj Gen Hamed Manahi al Mutairi, Assistant Undersecretary for Criminal Security Affairs, and Maj Gen Khalid Abdulhadi al Shanfa, Head of State Security Apparatus.

ONA

Public transport trial in Nizwa attracts over 31,000 passengers

Our Correspondent
Nizwa

A total of 31,306 passengers benefitted from a recently concluded public transportation service in Nizwa during its trial period from January 10 to 31.

Aimed at enhancing public transport options in Dakhliyah, the initiative was a collaborative effort between the governorate, Dakhliyah Governorate Police Command and Mwasalat.

During the 21-day trial, which took place in the evening hours, Mwasalat buses provided ser-



vices within the wilayat of Nizwa.

The 60-passenger capacity buses were available for free to Omani citizens. Expatriates paid a nominal fare of 200bz.

The public transport service

was part of a wider effort to improve mobility and accessibility for residents and visitors, with the strong response during the trial period suggesting the service's potential for long-term success in Nizwa.

SQU to host conference on innovation in medical education on Feb 10-11

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Represented by College of Medicine and Health Sciences, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) will host the Medical Education Conference 2025 on February 10 and 11 under the theme 'Innovation and New Technology: Opportunities and Challenges'.

The regional event aims to serve as a platform for discussing innovative approaches, technologies and challenges in medical education.

Prof Dr Rashid bin Khalfan al Abri, Chairman of the conference and Dean of College of Medicine and Health Sciences, said, "This event is an opportunity for sharing knowledge and exploring the latest innovations in medical education."

He expressed optimism that the event would lead to productive discussions, foster academic collaboration and enhance the quality of medical education in the region.



It will cover a wide range of topics, including competency-based medical education, distance and in-person learning, medical simulation with virtual and augmented reality, artificial intelligence in medical education, and evidence-based practices

PROF DR RASHID BIN KHALFAN AL ABRI

adapt to evolving educational demands.

Five distinguished speakers from the United States, Canada and the Netherlands will lead discussions on the role of modern technologies in transforming medical education. Participants will also explore leadership skills, professional development, and strategies to enhance educational research and collaboration within the academic community.

The event is expected to attract a diverse group of academics and healthcare professionals, including representatives from medical and nursing colleges, university hospitals, and educational institutions under Oman's Ministry of Health and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Collaborators include the Committee of Deans of Medical Colleges in the GCC, the University Medical City, and other

government and private health institutions, reflecting the regional significance of the event.

Medical Education Conference 2025 represents a key step towards preparing medical professionals in line with international standards. It underscores the importance of embracing modern technologies to advance education and improve the quality of healthcare training in the Middle East.

World Wetlands Day focuses on environmental awareness, community engagement

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Environment Authority (EA) marked World Wetlands Day on Wednesday with an event at Qurum Nature Reserve in Muscat held under the theme 'Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future'.

The event focused on raising environmental awareness, promoting community engagement and underlining the importance of wetlands in achieving sustainable development goals.

EA highlighted the environ-



mental and economic importance of wetlands, stressing their role in maintaining ecological balance, supporting biodiversity, and providing essential resources and services for human well-being. Wetlands also serve as critical natural systems, offering freshwater, aiding water purification, supporting agriculture, and acting as natural carbon sinks to combat climate change.

An exhibition accompanied the event, showcasing the diversity of Oman's wetlands through interactive displays. These included information on natural

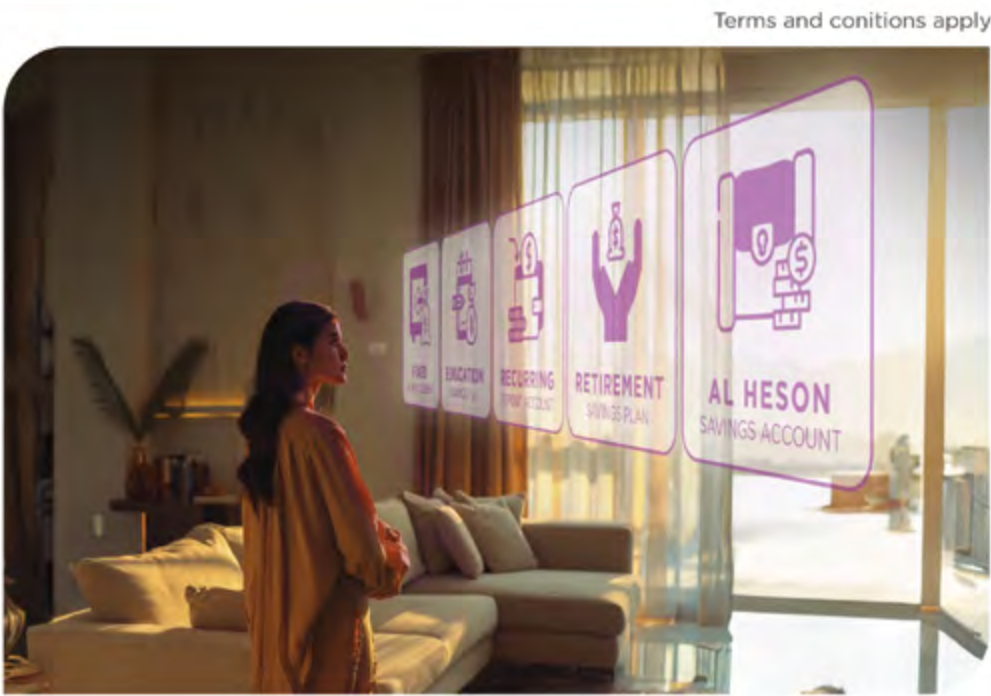
resources derived from wetlands, key environmental elements and EA's conservation projects. Several public and private organisations participated, presenting their initiatives aimed at wetland protection.

In 2023, EA implemented several projects to bolster wetland conservation, including planting 4mn mangrove seeds in coastal governorates and an additional 54,000 mangrove seedlings to strengthen coastal ecosystems. A comprehensive study was also carried out to monitor changes in wetlands

across 59 sites in the sultanate.

The ongoing Oman Blue Carbon Project aims to enhance carbon sequestration capabilities of wetlands. The authority is also conducting bird and wildlife surveys in wetlands to support biodiversity conservation.

Oman's wetlands remain a cornerstone for environmental and economic sustainability, providing crucial support for agriculture and local communities, while contributing significantly to global efforts in climate change mitigation and ecological preservation.



Empower your future today

With **BankDhofar** Ladies Account

Start Saving with BankDhofar Ladies account!
To know more, visit www.bankdhofar.com



MoE to introduce Chinese as elective subject

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In an important move to enhance global language competencies among Omani students, Ministry of Education (MoE) has announced introduction of Chinese as an elective subject for grades 9 to 12 commencing from the 2025-2026 academic year.

The new programme aims to strengthen language proficiency and promote cultural immersion, with classes scheduled five days a week to ensure consistent engagement and effective learning.

The curriculum is designed to equip students with foundational Chinese language skills, focusing on essential communication techniques, cultural insights, and practical knowledge that will support their future academic and professional aspirations.

Students will learn to introduce themselves, discuss places,



hobbies and aspirations, as well as navigate conversations about days, months, numbers and dates. The programme will use simplified Chinese, with emphasis on both reading and writing to build comprehensive language competence.

Initially, the programme will be piloted in four schools across two governorates. In Muscat, Sayyid Sultan bin Ahmed School will offer Chinese to grades 11 and 12, while Juwayriya bint Abi Sufyan

School will extend the programme to students of grades 9 to 12. In Dakhliyah, Al Turath District School and Al Shatha bint Jaber Basic Education School will also implement the curriculum for students in grades 9 to 12. The pilot phase will allow MoE to assess the programme's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments for broader implementation in the future.

The Chinese language programme will offer a compre-

hensive curriculum, incorporating first-level (A1.1) and second-level (A1.2) textbooks to provide a structured learning path. Both printed and digital educational resources will be utilised, ensuring students have access to diverse learning materials that cater to different learning styles.

Cultural enrichment activities, such as student camps, competitions and interactive events, will be integral to the programme, fostering a deeper understanding of Chinese culture alongside language acquisition.

To support modern language learning techniques, the programme will leverage advanced digital platforms, enhancing the classroom experience with interactive tools and resources. Additionally, students will be prepared for a Chinese proficiency test (HSK), enabling them to earn globally recognised certifications

that can enhance their academic and professional profiles.

Classes will be led by specialised, native Chinese-speaking teachers with extensive experience in teaching non-native speakers, ensuring high-quality instruction and effective language development.

This initiative aligns with Oman's strategic vision to prepare its youth for the global job market by broadening linguistic abilities and cultural awareness, a press release stated. 'With proficiency in Chinese, Omani students will gain a competitive edge in international academic and professional environments, enhancing their opportunities in an increasingly interconnected world. The introduction of Chinese in select schools marks a significant step towards equipping the next generation with the skills needed to thrive in a dynamic, global society.'

MoH urges support for blood donation campaigns in Ramadan

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With the holy month of Ramadan knocking on the door, the Department of Blood Bank Services of Ministry of Health (MoH) is calling on communities across Oman to play an active role in lifesaving blood donation efforts.

The Central Blood Bank in Bausher has highlighted the critical need to maintain an adequate blood supply during Ramadan when there are few blood donations.

To meet this growing need, the ministry is encouraging volunteer groups, mosque committees and public councils in Seeb, Bausher, Muttrah and Amerat to help organise local blood donation drives.

These campaigns are scheduled to take place from 8pm to 11.30pm, providing convenience

for donors to participate after iftar.

"Our goal is to make donating blood more convenient and to reach as many donors as possible during Ramadan," said a spokesperson of Department of Blood Bank Services (DBBS). "We invite community groups to support this noble cause, which aligns with the spirit of giving and charity during the holy month."

Interested groups and individuals are encouraged to coordinate with the Donor Affairs Department before Thursday, February 13. For more information or to register participation, call DBBS on 24591255/24594255 or WhatsApp via 94555648.

Central Blood Bank is urging people to donate with the slogan 'Double your blessings this Ramadan - donate blood and save lives'.



Symposium addresses SMEs' key challenges and opportunities

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) held a symposium on small and medium enterprises titled 'Tamkeen and Smou' on Wednesday.

The event was held under the patronage of Badr bin Salem al Maamari, Secretary General of Tender Board.

The symposium aimed to empower SMEs, addressing key challenges and opportunities in the local market, focusing on the role of financing agencies in supporting SME growth, the importance of local content programmes, and fostering co-operation among stakeholders to develop sustainable solutions for the sector.

According to Faisal bin Abdulah al Rawas, Chairman of OCCI, the symposium highlighted the incentives necessary for SMEs to thrive in Oman and expand regionally and globally. The event discussed challenges faced by SMEs which were addressed by participating government representatives, who also showcased available incentives.

Ahmed bin Amer al Maslahi, Chairman of SME Committee at OCCI, highlighted the government's support for the sector and its recognition as a vital component of economic diversification. He stressed the chamber's role in integrating SMEs with major companies through innovative solutions and quality business opportunities that promote sustainable growth.

Maslahi informed that OCCI, through its sectoral committees,

business environment, promote economic development across governorates, and support economic diversification. According to the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, approximately 28,000 SMEs with entrepreneurship cards are registered, reflecting the sector's critical role in job creation and economic growth.

The symposium responded to the evolving needs of SMEs, ad-

Approximately 28,000 SMEs are registered with Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development with entrepreneurship cards

actively supports the development of SMEs via various tools and programmes aimed at driving economic growth. "The chamber works to create a supportive environment for SMEs, enhance their contribution to the national economy, and review government efforts and incentives that strengthen their role."

Furthermore, he noted that OCCI strives to improve the

addressing key issues to ensure the sector's sustainability. These include establishing an accurate database to support active, owner-managed institutions, enhancing the role of financing agencies by simplifying procedures and expediting financing, and promoting local content in commercial opportunities through fair competitive contracts.

Vishweshwar Reddy Kalavala
Founder & Chairman (GTA)

Manda Bhim Reddy,
Convener,
TPCC NRI Cell

Nangi Devendhar Reddy
Intl. Co-Ordinator NRI Affairs TPCC

Baira Dev Yadav
Social & Welfare

Ravi Katakam
GWAC President-UAE

Vamsi Goud
GWAC UAE Vice President

Akula Gagan
GWAC Dubai Co-ordinator

Welcome

Shri Aadi Srinivas MLA & Govt. Whip

Shri Paidi Rakesh Reddy MLA

Vemulawada & Armour Assembly
Constituency Legislators on visit to Oman

Lakshman Nune

Ganesh Gundeti

Srinivas Buka

Prathap Reddy Ettedi

Best Wishes from:

HYDERABAD GOLD & DIAMONDS

MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,573.32
Sensex	78,271.28
FOREX RATES (RO1 equals)	
India	226.95
Pakistan	724.42
Bangladesh	315.62
Philippines	150.43
Sri Lanka	775.59

*Rates as on February 05
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Oil prices fall on higher US stockpiles

Oil prices declined on Wednesday after a larger-than-expected increase in US crude oil stockpiles signaled weakening demand in the world's biggest oil consumer.

The international benchmark Brent crude fell by 0.09%, trading at \$75.75 per barrel, down from \$75.82 at the close of the previous session.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) declined by 0.1%, settling at \$72.23 per barrel, compared to its prior session close of \$72.32.

Promising Startups Market at MSX to boost entrepreneurship: FSA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has affirmed that the issuance of the Royal Decree establishing a sub-market at the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), under the name of the Promising Startups Market, on Tuesday, is clear evidence of the great attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the government to developing the investment and business environment in Oman, in addition to enhancing the stock market sector.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, the FSA explained that the Promising Startups Market aims to attract private firms, family businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and emerging startups, with a market value of no less than ROO.5mn.

The FSA added that this initiative seeks to achieve two main



goals: (1) enabling these startups to benefit from the financing alternatives provided by the capital market, allowing them to thrive and expand; and (2) empowering these startups to adopt approved governance standards to ensure their sustainability in the future.

The FSA stressed that this

step would enhance the role of the stock market as a major financing tool, contributing to the development of an attractive investment environment that supports the national economy in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The presence of these startups on the stock market will pre-

pare them to meet the requirements for offering their shares in public listings and adding them to the main stock market in the future, once they fulfil the pre-scribed conditions,' the authority said.

Under this decree, the FSA will supervise and audit the activities

Financial Services Authority stressed that the establishment of Promising Startups Index would enhance the role of stock market as a major financing tool, contributing to the development of an attractive investment environment

firmed the issuance of the Royal Decree establishing a sub-market for startups at the Muscat Stock Exchange.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, ASMED said that the Royal Decree reflects the royal vision to support the private sector and SMEs, enhance the business environment, and ensure the growth and sustainability of pioneering companies, contributing to diversifying the national economy.

H E Halima bint Rashid al Zar'iyah, Chairperson of the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, explained that the establishment of this market represents a qualitative shift in empowering SMEs and startups based on innovation. She added that the establishment of this sub-market encourages SMEs, emerging and innovative companies to enter the financial market, providing new opportunities for investment and growth in various economic sectors.

Al Ramz Corporation gets market maker license from Muscat Stock Exchange

Muscat – Al Ramz Corporation, a UAE-based leading financial services institution with over 25 years of expertise in capital markets, has been granted a market maker license by the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), marking a significant milestone in its regional expansion strategy.

The license further strengthens Al Ramz's role as a key enabler of market efficiency in the GCC, bringing its proven market-making expertise to Oman. With a track record of enhancing price discovery, narrowing spreads, and stabilising trading environments in the UAE, Al Ramz is well-positioned to support MSX's liquidity enhancement goals under Oman Vision 2040.

In a press release, Karim Shoeib, Group CEO - Investment Banking, Al Ramz, said, "Expanding our market-making opera-



Expanding our market-making operations into Oman is a strategic step in our broader mission to strengthen our presence across the GCC

KARIM SHOEIB

tions into Oman is a strategic step in our broader mission to strengthen our presence across the GCC. This expansion is aligned with Oman Vision 2040's commitment to developing capital markets and fostering financial sustainability. As we extend our reach, we remain dedicated to playing a leading

role in regional markets by reinforcing investor confidence and upholding the highest standards of market integrity."

He said, "Our confidence in this expansion is rooted in the strength of our business model, which has evolved through the development of advanced quantitative strategies, algorithmic

trading capabilities, and well-established governance frameworks. By optimising order flow, enhancing price discovery, and reducing volatility, we aim to drive market efficiency while ensuring responsible market practices. Backed by a highly skilled team and cutting-edge technology, we look forward to contributing meaningfully to the growth, resilience, and stability of Oman's financial ecosystem."

Al Ramz's most recent expansion underscores its commitment to supporting regional capital markets with best-in-class market-making capabilities. Leveraging insights from its governance leadership in liquidity provision, the firm remains dedicated to fostering ethical and sustainable financial markets while ensuring transparency, market stability, and regulatory alignment.

Sukuk market likely to get more time to adopt Standard 62: S&P

Our Correspondent
Muscat

At the beginning of February, the Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) held several public hearings on Sharia Standard 62. According to S&P Global Ratings, this standard will shape the future of the sukuk market.

S&P expects that the AAOIFI will likely grant issuers more time to implement Sharia Standard 62. In its public hearing over the weekend, the AAOIFI indicated that it is likely to approve Standard 62 in 2025, and issuers will probably have between one and three years to implement the

new requirements, depending on the AAOIFI's final decision.

"Depending on the final timeline the AAOIFI sets for the market, this development could provide sukuk structurers with more time to develop structures that strike a balance between

complying with the new requirements and making the sukuk attractive to fixed-income investors, if this is still possible," said S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Mohamed Damak.

"However, the adoption of the standard could lead to a decline in sukuk issuance," Damak added.

If adopted as proposed, Sharia Standard 62 would, in S&P's

view, result in the sukuk market shifting away from structures where the sukuk sponsors' contractual obligations underpin their repayments, towards structures where the underlying assets play a more prominent role.

Notwithstanding the additional time issuers will have to adjust to the new requirements, investors are likely to face new risks related to asset performance and value, S&P said.

"We continue to believe that if the standard is adopted as proposed, some investors and issuers may opt for alternatives to the sukuk market, as issuing sukuk may become more onerous from a risk/reward perspective. This could also encourage some adopters to move away from the standards if their ability to access the capital markets is significantly restricted," Damak said.



GCC MACRO & MARKETS



M.R. RAGHU,
CEO OF MARMORE
MENA INTELLIGENCE

January 2025 clearly belonged to Kuwait, as the Kuwait All Share Index rose by 5.7%, compared to the S&P GCC Composite Index, which increased by 3.0%. Several factors are driving Kuwait's markets, including optimism surrounding the new government and its focus on project spending.

There has also been some movement at the stock-specific level, notably involving Gulf Bank's proposed merger with Boubayan Bank, which was subsequently cancelled. Kuwait's banking system, like those of Saudi Arabia or Qatar, hosts only a handful of banks, dominated by

Kuwait Finance House (KFH) and the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK). Among the stocks listed in Kuwait, these two account for 46% of the total market capitalisation. This creates a highly fragmented structure, where other banks can achieve reasonable scale only through mergers. This trend is likely to be observed in the other markets mentioned above as businesses evolve. Merger considerations will also revolve around Islamic banking, which has proven to be more profitable with the increasing market size. When mid-sized and smaller banks merge, it will shrink the overall number of players to just a few (from a handful).

Saudi Arabia has also made a strong start to 2025, with a month-to-date (MTD) and year-to-date (YTD) gain of 3.1%, followed by Abu Dhabi at 1.8% and Dubai at 0.4%.

In my earlier report, I argued for better storytelling of the GCC to Emerging Market (EM) fund managers to attract active managers to the region. There are various ways to do this, and one approach is to showcase the metrics of GCC stocks present in the MSCI EM index and compare them to non-GCC stocks within the same index.

For example, liquidity, as mea-

sured by the stock turnover ratio for non-GCC stocks in the EM index, was 1.26, compared to 0.61 for GCC stocks (present in the EM index). Some countries within the EM index, such as China, enjoy a turnover ratio of 4.5!

It is true that liquidity improves once investor interest increases, but it can also play out counterintuitively, where investor interest can be contingent on liquidity being available in traded stocks. GCC stocks perform better from a dividend yield perspective, with GCC stocks in the EM index enjoying a dividend yield of 3.36%, while the same for non-GCC EM stocks stood at 2.69%. Interestingly, India has a dividend yield of only 1.14%, while Brazil tops the list with 5.17%. On the return parameter, the overall return-on-equity (RoE) of GCC stocks, at 16.42%, is marginally higher than 15.71% for non-GCC stocks.

Trump has formally assumed office, and the Middle East is watching on many fronts, including geopolitics, investments, and oil prices. Trump is advocating for lower oil prices (currently trading at \$76.8 per barrel) and higher inward investments from the GCC, especially Saudi Arabia. Both of these factors are negative for


GCC stocks perform better from a dividend yield perspective, with GCC stocks in the EM index enjoying a dividend yield of 3.36%, while the same for non-GCC EM stocks stood at 2.69%

the region. Saudi Arabia has pledged \$600bn of investment in the US over the next few years, while Trump is pushing for \$1tn! Trump's lack of interest in climate change and renewables may benefit the fossil fuel industry, but he is also encouraging US oil producers to increase output in an effort to reduce oil prices.

If this trajectory holds, the region may need to brace for more fiscal deficits, likely resulting in higher sovereign bond issuances. S&P Global expects global sukuk issuances to reach about \$190bn to \$200bn in 2025, with foreign currency-denominated issuances contributing roughly \$70bn to \$80bn. The GCC is projected to account for the lion's share of these issuances. Given Trump's trade rhetoric, which is likely to keep the US dollar strong, the yields offered by GCC issuances could be attractive to foreign investors looking to avoid emerging market currency risks. Most GCC countries' currencies are pegged to the US dollar.

Finally, a word about the ongoing DeepSeek saga and its likely impact on energy demand. I have written a longer piece on DeepSeek in my other newsletter, which focuses on the global economy. However, in this

newsletter, I would like to assess the impact of the DeepSeek saga from an energy demand perspective. Energy use by AI-based applications has become a significant driver of energy demand, as AI initiatives are highly energy-intensive (like Bitcoin mining). Data centres that employ thousands of computers with high-end chips must run models on a vast scale and "train" the models to perform their intended tasks. In this process, the estimated energy consumption can be as large as the energy use of an entire city! Hence, we can see that energy consumption is a key assumption in this AI landscape.

However, DeepSeek has questioned that assumption, claiming to have developed a foundational AI model that uses a fraction of the energy. If that is the case, the actual energy use for developing AI models may not be as high as previously assumed. This would affect a range of industries, including utilities, power plant operators, uranium producers, natural gas pipeline operators, cooling system operators, and nuclear power. It could also be argued that higher efficiency will lead to greater AI model usage, which may ultimately be energy accretive.

Central banks fuel gold's record-breaking rally

Piero Cingari

Gold's relentless rise has stunned markets, shattering price records and climbing nearly 10% since the start of the year, a pace of growth not witnessed since 1980 over the same time frame, leaving investors questioning whether this rally signals the dawn of a new gold era.

As central banks speed up purchases and geopolitical tensions fuel demand for safe-haven assets, many are wondering whether this is the beginning of a new era for gold.

On Wednesday morning trading in Europe, gold surged above \$2,870 per ounce, continuing its impressive rally as investors - particularly central banks - flocked to bullion amid growing economic uncertainty.

While gold typically benefits from a weaker US dollar, falling Treasury yields, or expectations of Federal Reserve interest rate cuts, this time, the rally appears to be fuelled by deeper structural forces.

Otávio Costa, macro strategist at Crescat Capital, said that "the world is experiencing a real-time history lesson on the significance of gold". According to Costa, several macroeconomic forces are pushing gold higher, highlighting a combination of factors reminiscent of past economic crises.

Government debt levels have reached historic highs, echoing the debt problem of the 1940s while inflationary pressures are mounting in a way that resembles the challenges of the 1970s.

Meanwhile, extreme asset valuations in equity markets bring back memories of the financial excesses of the 1920s and 1990s. With the US fiscal deficit widening and G7 economies entering a period of manufacturing revitalisation and deglobalisation, gold is increasingly considered to be a hedge against financial instability.

Central banks lead the charge

A key factor behind gold's bullish trend is the unprecedented pace of purchases by central bank. In 2024 alone, central banks acquired more than 1,000 tonnes of gold for the third consecutive



year, with buying accelerating sharply in the fourth quarter to 333 tonnes, according to the latest World Gold Council report.

"Global reserve allocations to gold have doubled over the past 10 years, and this is likely to be an ongoing trend given concerns around US fiscal sustainability and geopolitics", said Callum Thomas, head of research at Topdown Charts.

Is London running out of gold?

Amid gold's price surge, reports have emerged of disruptions in the London gold market, with traders scrambling to borrow bullion from central banks as shipments to the US see a spike.

Reuters reported last week that the Bank of England, which stores gold for central banks, is experiencing withdrawal delays

gold market.

Norman believes the concerns have been overblown. "My first thoughts are - OK, to put that into perspective, that's actually about a couple of average trading days' volume or turnover for the London gold market - interesting, but only maybe," he said.

London still holds about 8,710 tonnes of gold, according to London Bullion Market Association vault statistics. While 435 tonnes have moved to New York, this remains a fraction of the overall supply.

Despite gold's rapid ascent, some indicators suggest the rally is far from over.

Unlike previous gold bull markets, exchange-traded fund flows remain muted, retail investors have low allocations, and media coverage has yet to reach euphoric levels—signs that sentiment is not yet overheated.

Thomas said that his data shows ETF outflows, low retail investor allocations, and media apathy, which suggests there is still room for gold to extend its gains. With both structural and cyclical factors still in play, gold's bull market appears well-supported for now.

Whether this is the start of a sustained new gold rush or just another cyclical upswing remains to be seen, but for now, investors and central banks alike are betting big on bullion. (Source: Euronews.com)

On Wednesday morning trading in Europe, gold surged above \$2,870 per ounce, continuing its impressive rally as investors flocked to bullion amid growing economic uncertainty

According to Goldman Sachs estimates, since the freezing of Russia's central bank assets in 2022, global central bank demand on the London over-the-counter market has surged fivefold, reflecting growing fears of potential financial restrictions. Goldman Sachs remains bullish on gold, maintaining its long position as its "highest conviction trade" across commodities.

"We continue to see value in long gold positions as a hedge against several tail risks, such as tariff escalation, geopolitical oil supply disruptions, and debt fears," said Samantha Dart, commodities analyst at Goldman Sachs.

of up to four weeks - far longer than the usual few days.

This rush stems from traders hedging risks on the COMEX exchange and capitalising on a price premium between US futures and London spot prices.

However, Ross Norman, CEO at Metals Daily, dismissed concerns: "The situation is temporary and mainly a logistical reshuffling, not a fundamental shortage of gold."

Gold is being moved from London to New York via Switzerland because US buyers require smaller kilobars instead of the standard 400-ounce bars. Swiss refineries are busy converting the gold, which has caused delays but is a normal process in the

UAE's non-oil trade hits AED3tn in 2024

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Dr Thani bin Ahmed al Zeyoudi, Minister of State for Foreign Trade, stated that the UAE's non-oil foreign trade has continued its upward trajectory, reaching AED3tn in 2024, with a record annual increase of 14.6% compared to 2023.

In statements to the Emirates News Agency (WAM), Dr Zeyoudi said, "Guided by the strategic vision of the national leadership, the UAE's foreign trade continues its remarkable upward trajectory. In 2024, our non-oil foreign trade reached an all-time high of AED2.997tn, increasing by 14.6% on 2023 against a global trade growth average of around 2.4%. The milestone also means we have achieved 75% of the AED4tn target set in the 'We the UAE 2031' national vision with seven full years remaining."

He further stated, "The expansion of foreign trade is the centrepiece of our national economic strategy and, through our Comprehensive Economic



The expansion of foreign trade is the centrepiece of our national economic strategy and, through our Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) programme

DR THANI BIN AHMED AL ZEYUODI

Partnership Agreement (CEPA) programme, we are expanding opportunities for our private sector by enhancing access to high-growth markets around the world. In 2024, we have been able to see the positive impact of this program. Total exports to CEPA partner countries reached AED135 billion in 2024, an increase of 42.3% and contributing 24% of our total non-oil exports. India and Türkiye are the two leading destinations for non-oil exports."

Zeyoudi concluded, "Importantly, the record trade figures posted in 2024 reflect the dynamism and agility of our economy, one that has remained open to the world's trade, talent and investment. Moreover, they underline the fact that we are not only on the right path but paving the way for others to follow - and we look forward to adding more CEPA partners in 2025 and beyond to share in this success."

WAM

US trade deficit hits highest since 2022

Washington, US - The US trade deficit widened by 24.7% month-on-month to \$98.4bn in December 2024, its highest level since March 2022, according to the Commerce Department's Census Bureau on Wednesday.

The figure was above the market forecast of \$96.5bn while the trade gap for November was revised to \$78.9bn.

As American businesses hurried to stock up on goods before US President Donald Trump's tariffs took effect, imports rose by 3.5% month-on-month, reaching a record-breaking \$364.9bn.

Exports, on the other hand, dropped 2.6% from a month ago to \$266.5bn.

For the whole 2024, the goods and services deficit in-

creased 17% from the previous year to \$918.4bn.

Exports climbed 3.9% to \$3.2tn and imports went up 6.6% to \$4.1tn.

The largest trade gaps were recorded with China (\$295.4bn), the EU (\$235.6bn) and Mexico (\$171.8bn). The trade deficit with Canada stood at \$63.34bn.

Anadolu Agency



Welcome

Shri Aadi Srinivas MLA & Govt. Whip
Shri Paidi Rakesh Reddy MLA
Shri Baira Dev Yadav

Vemulawada & Armour Assembly
Constituency Legislators on visit to Oman

Best Wishes from:



Raghu Chedalu, Prasad Chedalu & Raju Chedalu
Chinthakunta Aadi Yuvasena



Welcome

Shri Aadi Srinivas MLA & Govt. Whip
Shri Paidi Rakesh Reddy MLA

Vemulawada & Armour Assembly
Constituency Legislators on visit to Oman

Best Wishes from:



Manchikatla Kumar
Ravi Sunkari
Ravi Sadula
Ravi Investment
SPC Company

Oman Post celebrates the sultanate's rich heritage

Oman Post proudly embraces its role as a custodian of Oman's history and heritage, commemorating pivotal national and historical events through its meticulously crafted stamp collections.

Each stamp issuance tells a timeless story, celebrating Oman's journey and accomplishments while inspiring pride in future generations, a press release said.

For decades, Oman Post has served as a storyteller of Oman's legacy, crafting artful stamps that transcend functionality to become enduring symbols of cultural pride and heritage. These commemorative collections celebrate the breadth of Omani identity, honoring national celebrations, cultural milestones, and historical events. Oman Post now extends its narrative to a global audience by collaborating with international postal providers, reinforcing its



commitment to cultural exchange and fostering international co-operation.

Among its most notable recent releases is the commemorative stamp esteeming the 5th anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's accession to power. This special edition stamp highlights the pillars of Oman Vision 2040: Econ-



omy & Development, People and Society, Governance & Institutional Performance, and Sustainable Environment. Symbolising the sultanate's remarkable progress, it embodies the aspirations and victories realized under His Majesty's visionary leadership, paving the way for a prosperous future.

Building on its tradition of

commemorating national feats, Oman Post recently unveiled the 280th Anniversary of the Al Busaid Dynasty's Reign stamp collection. This collection signifies 280 years of transformative leadership, paying tribute to the dynasty's enduring impact on Oman's past, present and future. Featuring portraits of notable leaders from the Al Busaid Dy-

nasty, the stamps are crafted with exceptional artistry, showcasing a regal palette of deep reds, greens, and gold accents that reflect Oman's royal and cultural heritage.

Oman Post's dedication to preserving Oman's history ensures that the nation's most significant attainment continue to resonate with collectors.

The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat offers V-day experiences

This Valentine's Day, The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort invites couples to immerse themselves in a realm of elegance and intimacy, featuring thoughtfully curated experiences designed to create unforgettable moments together. With exclusive offerings ranging from private suite getaways to enchanting beachside dinners, the resort promises an unforgettable celebration of love.

The ultimate romantic escape awaits at the Pearl Suite, where breathtaking views and a sophisticated ambiance set the stage for an intimate one-day romantic retreat. As the sun sets, couples



will be treated to a private balcony dinner, with every detail, from the gourmet menu to the

candlelit setting, meticulously curated for an intimate evening under the stars, a press release

said.

Zorba invites guests to embrace a one-of-a-kind beachfront transformation creating a sanctuary of love and serenity, which presents two captivating options. The Valentine's Day Beachside Cabana Dinner provides a dreamy setting with soft lantern glow, live entertainment, and a curated menu for two in an idyllic secluded beach location. Alternatively, guests can savor a specially crafted Valentine's Set Menu Dinner at Zorba, where exquisite flavors and an enchanting beachfront atmosphere come together to create a truly magical dining experience.

Couples can immerse themselves in a journey of relaxation and connection at the renowned Guerlain Spa with a serene Valentine's experience. Indulge in a 90-minute rejuvenating couple's massage followed by a 30-minute romantic bath ritual designed to relax and refresh the senses. For those seeking an elevated offering, the Guerlain Spa has collaborated with Novikov Café to offer a seamless blend of wellness and culinary delight. After the soothing treatments, couples can enjoy a sharing-style set menu paired with a refreshing beverage of their choice at Novikov Café.



Sohar International renews partnership with Al Harthy

Reinforcing its commitment to empowering Omani talent and elevating the nation's presence on the global stage, Sohar International has proudly renewed its sponsorship agreement with celebrated Omani racing driver, Ahmad al Harthy, for the 2025 FIA World Endurance Championship (FIA WEC).

The agreement was signed by Abdul Wahid al Murshidi, Acting CEO of Sohar International, and Ahmad al Harthy at the Waterfront building marking a continued partnership that first commenced in 2022, a press release said.

This collaboration aligns with Sohar International's vision of fostering excellence, leadership, and national pride through strategic alliances. Harthy, a pioneering figure in Omani motorsport and the first sports person

to receive a Royal Commendation from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, exemplifies the values of determination and success that the bank upholds.

Reflecting on the renewed partnership, Murshidi said, "Ahmad Al Harthy has consistently demonstrated perseverance and excellence on the global motorsport stage, embodying the same agility and resilience that define Sohar International. We take great pride in supporting homegrown talent who not only carry the Omani flag internationally but also inspire the next generation to push boundaries and achieve greatness. Our financial services, vision, and values align seamlessly with Ahmad's approach to racing and his role as a distinguished ambassador for Oman. He has accomplished much in

his remarkable motorsport career, and this year holds great promise. Sohar International is proud to support him as he takes on the biggest challenge of his career yet."

Harthy will compete for a second season with BMW and Team WRT in the FIA WEC, driving the high-profile No 46 BMW M4 LMGT3 alongside legendary motorsport figures Valentino Rossi and Kelvin van der Linde. This marks his third year in the global endurance championship, further strengthening Oman's representation on the world stage.

Harthy expressed his enthusiasm, saying, "I'm really delighted to have Sohar International onboard for our 2025 season, focused on the FIA World Endurance Championship with BMW and Team WRT."

Human Fraternity awards recognise 2025 honourees among world leaders in UAE



Under the patronage of Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, president of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, attended the ceremony of the sixth edition of the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity.

Held on Tuesday at the Founder's Memorial in Abu Dhabi, the ceremony gathered world leaders, dignitaries, and humanitarian advocates, including president of East Timor José Ramos-Horta, Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, Sheikh Khalifa bin Mohammed bin Khalid al Nahyan, chairman of the Wajib Volunteer Association,

Sheikh Zayed bin Hamad al Nahyan, chairman of The Founder's Office, Sheikh Shakhboot Nahyan al Nahyan, cabinet member and Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah bin Sultan bin Awad al Nuaimi, Minister of Justice, Noura al Kaabi, Minister of State, Ahmed bin Ali al Sayegh, Minister of State, Sheikh Salem Bin Khalid al Qassimi, Minister of Culture, Mohamed Khalifa al Mubarak, chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, Dr Mugheer Khamis al Khaili, chairman of the Department of Community Development, First Lady of Colombia Verónica del Socorro Alcocer García, and former president of the European Council Charles Michel.

The event - with the theme 'Tapestry of Humanity' - opened with a moving performance by 18-year-old sight-impaired Indonesian singer Putri Ariani and Emirati pianist Rashed Al Marzooqi.

The ceremony coincided with the UN-recognised International Day of Human Fraternity, which commemorates the signing of the Abu Dhabi Document on Human Fraternity by His Holiness Pope Francis, head of the Catholic Church, and His Eminence Ahmed al Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al Azhar, on February 4, 2019.

The Zayed Award for Human Fraternity recognised three honourees, namely Prime Minister

of Barbados Mia Amor Mottley, SC, MP, for her visionary leadership and climate advocacy, World Central Kitchen (WCK) - founded by Chef José Andrés - for the organisation's relentless commitment to providing food relief in conflict zones and following natural disasters, and 15-year-old health innovator Heman Bekele for his efforts in developing a cancer-fighting soap to treat early-stage skin cancer.

Mia Amor Mottley received the award for her bold leadership on climate action. Heman Bekele received the award for his ambition to save the lives of the most vulnerable and his vision of accessible and affordable healthcare.



Sony ME World Photography Award presented

Sony Middle East and Africa revealed Donell Gumiran as United Arab Emirates National Award winner for the Sony World Photography Awards 2025.

The National and Regional Awards programme is an initiative set up by Sony and Creo under its photography strand the World Photography Organisation to support local photographic communities around the world, with 56 countries taking part this year, a press release said.

Across this year's Awards over 419,000 images from over 200 countries and territories were submitted to the Sony World Photography Awards 2025. National and Regional Award winners were selected from the Open competition, which champions the best single images taken in the past year.

Donell Gumiran was anonymously selected by judges for his photograph 'A Timeless Tradition,' entered into the Lifestyle category of the Open competition. This photograph captures a moment as an Emirati woman stands by the Corniche seaside in Abu Dhabi, with an old fisherman's boat in the foreground, gazing thoughtfully at the horizon.

Dressed in traditional attire, she exudes a sense of pride and strength. The photographer notes that she 'embodies the rich heritage of Arab culture.' The tranquil sea in front of her symbolises a deep connection to the land and the traditions that shape Emirati identity.

Donell Gumiran's acclaimed photographs and articles have been featured in esteemed publications such as National Geographic España, Forbes, BBC News, and Vogue. His photographic endeavors have led him around the world, showcasing his work in galleries and at international competitions in cities like London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, Abu Dhabi, Madrid, New York, and Moscow.

Gumiran said: "I am truly grateful to be chosen as the UAE National Award winner for the Sony World Photography Awards 2025. Photography allows me to tell stories and capture moments that matter. 'A Timeless Tradition' is special to me because it reflects the rich culture and heritage of the UAE. I'm thankful to Sony and the World Photography Organisation for giving photographers like me a chance to share our work with the world."

US Senate committee advances RFK Jr health sec nomination

Washington, D.C., US - Robert F Kennedy Jr's candidacy for Secretary of Health and Human Services in US President Donald Trump's new administration received a boost on Tuesday when the United State Senate Committee on Finance voted to advance his nomination to the full Senate for a confirmation vote.



Robert F Kennedy Jr

Trump's nomination of Kennedy for the key public health role has been considered controversial due to the latter's role in the anti-vaccine movement. National health groups, Democrats, the Wall Street Journal and New York Post editorial boards and even family members had all voiced opposition to his nomination.

Vote fell along party lines
But the committee on Tuesday voted 14-13 to advance Kennedy 'favourably' to a final vote. While all the Democrats on the committee voted against Kennedy, all the Republicans voted in favour, including Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, a physician who admitted last week that, as a medical doctor

who also chairs the Health, Education, Labour, and Pensions Committee, he was 'struggling' with the decision. As the vote was occurring, Cassidy posted on social media that he conducted 'very intense conversations' with Kennedy and the White House over the weekend, thanking Vice-President J D Vance in particular for his 'honest counsel'.

He said: "With the serious commitments I've received from the administration and the opportunity to make progress on the issues we agree on like healthy foods and a pro-American agenda, I will vote yes." If confirmed in the full Senate, which could happen as early as this week, Kennedy will oversee more than US\$3tn in healthcare spending, including the agency

in charge of the Medicare and Medicaid. Despite spreading doubts about the efficacy and safety of vaccines which are proven to have helped curb disease and prevent deaths for decades, Kennedy disputes anti-vaccine characterisation and has said he would not prevent Americans from getting inoculations. DW

President Trump orders US withdrawal from UN bodies

Washington, D.C., US - President Donald Trump on Tuesday signed an executive order withdrawing the US from the United Nations' Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The order is also prompting a review of US funding for the United Nations. Trump also ordered a US withdrawal from the UN relief agency for Palestinians (UNRWA). He said that Washington intends to review its involvement in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Trump pulled the US out of UNHRC in 2018 during his first term in office. Former President Joe Biden reinstated the US' membership of the organisation in 2021. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres 'has worked tirelessly to implement many reforms ... to increase efficiency and innovation', his spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in response to Trump's announcement. "US support for the United Nations has saved countless lives and advanced global security," he said. "The Secretary-General looks forward to continuing his produc-



US President Donald Trump

More generally, the executive order calls for review of US involvement and funding in the UN in light of the wild disparities and levels of funding among different countries

WILL SCHARF

tive relationship with President Trump and the US Government to strengthen that relationship in today's turbulent world." 'UN is biased against Washington' White House staff secretary Will Scharf claimed there was an

'anti-American bias' at the UN agencies. "More generally, the executive order calls for review of American involvement and funding in the UN in light of the wild disparities and levels of funding among different countries," said Scharf. Meanwhile, Trump said the

UN has 'tremendous potential' but that it is 'not being well run'. "It should be funded by everybody, but we're disproportionate, as we always seem to be," he said. UN has 'got to get their act together', says Trump. The intergovernmental organisation has 'got to get their act together', Trump told reporters. "It's not being well run, to be honest and they're not doing the job." "A lot of these conflicts that we're working on should be settled, or at least we should have some help in settling them. We never seem to get help. That should be the primary purpose of the United Nations," Trump added. Trump has vehemently campaigned against the United States' funding of multilateral bodies, during both his first term and as he embarks on his second as president, calling for other nations to up their contributions, in particular in relation to the NATO military alliance. The 47 members of the UN Human Rights Council are elected by the General Assembly to three-year terms, with the US ending its latest term on December 31. DW



Welcome

Shri Aadi Srinivas MLA & Govt. Whip
Shri Paidi Rakesh Reddy MLA

Vemulawada & Armour Assembly
Constituency Legislators on visit to Oman

Best Wishes from:

Tamme & Partners Int LLC
(A FMC & Trading Co)

Opening shortly

TAASS - Fine dine Multicusine Resto & Cafe @ Azaiba

Sudan: Is it countdown for war?

Khartoum, Sudan - The most recent advances by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan's capital Khartoum and the nearby city of Omdurman indicate a change to the bitter and bloody stalemate that has dominated the past months of the Sudanese war. Last week, General Abdel-Fattah Burhan, who heads the SAF, returned to headquarters in Khartoum for the first time in almost two years. Earlier in January, the SAF had managed to recapture the strategically important city of Wad Madani, which is around 180km (110 miles) south of Khartoum. "When Wad Madani fell to the Rapid Support Forces in December 2023, a shock went through the entire country," Hager Ali, a researcher at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies, told DW. "The Sudanese lost confidence in the Sudanese Armed Forces' ability, which is why Wad Madani is seared into the peoples' memories as a watershed moment," she added. The RSF had burned crops, razed fields and destroyed farming equipment. "They weaponised hunger against the people of Sudan in order to establish control," Ali explained, adding that 'this was the moment when food insecurity not only became worse by a hundred-fold, it also became something that nobody is going to be able to remedy for the foreseeable future'.



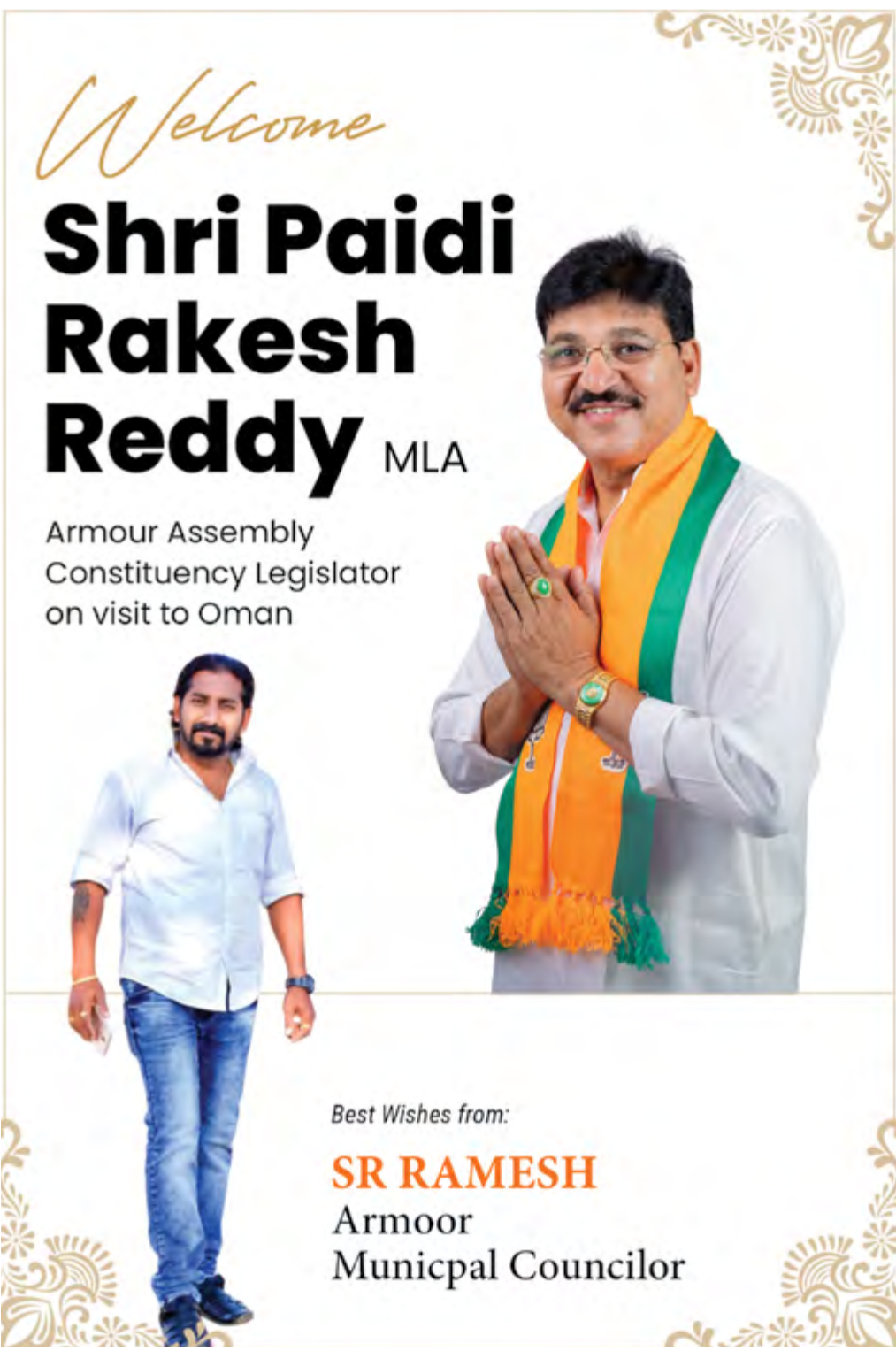
After the Sudanese Armed Forces recaptured Khartoum, Omdurman and Wad Madani, Sudanese are hoping that the bloody war between the two generals will come to an end after almost two years

Owing to the loss of vital infrastructure in the central city, 'the tactical and strategic significance that Wad Madani had a year ago as Sudan's breadbasket is almost gone'. **Darfur as the next and last battle?** Since the RFS' loss of Wad Madani, many of its paramilitary fighters have retreated to Sudan's western Darfur region, where the RSF control four out of five districts. "The countdown for an end of the war has begun, the field of war has moved to El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur," Osman Mirghani, the editor-in-chief of the Sudanese newspaper Al-Tayar, told DW's radio show Sudan Now. El Fasher has been under a siege by the RSF since May 2024. According to UN estimates, the humanitarian situation in Darfur has become particularly dire. Some 1.6mn

people are displaced from North Darfur alone, around two million people are facing extreme food insecurity, while 320,000 are already in famine conditions. Sudanese civilians across the country have been bearing the brunt of the conflict, which broke out in April 2023 when General Abdel-Fattah Burhan fell out with his former deputy General Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo over the integration of the paramilitary RSF into the regular army. Clashes between both forces and their allies killed tens of thousands of civilians and displaced more than 12mn. Over 30mn Sudanese, over half of them children, are in need of humanitarian aid. According to the US-based global relief organisation International Rescue Committee, Sudan's war has triggered the 'largest humanitarian crisis ever recorded'. DW

Ismaili Muslim leader Aga Khan dies at 88

Lisbon, Portugal - The Aga Khan, imam of the Ismaili Muslims, has died 'peacefully' at the age of 88 in Lisbon, his foundation announced on Tuesday. "His Highness Prince Karim Al-Hussaini, Aga Khan IV, 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims and direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), passed away peacefully in Lisbon on 4 February 2025, aged 88, surrounded by his family," the Aga Khan Foundation posted on social media. "The announcement of his designated successor will follow," it added in relation to who could become the fifth person to hold the post since the 19th century. **Who was the Aga Khan?** Considered by those that followed him to be a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, the Aga Khan became the spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims at the age of 20 as a Harvard undergraduate. He poured a material empire built on billions of dollars in tithes into constructing homes, hospitals and schools in developing countries. Present most notably in central and southern Asia, Africa and the Middle East, the Ismaili community numbers some 12mn to 15mn people, according to its website. It is a branch of Shiite Islam. DW



Welcome

Shri Paidi Rakesh Reddy MLA

Armour Assembly
Constituency Legislator
on visit to Oman

Best Wishes from:

SR RAMESH
Armoor
Municipal Councilor

30 more Palestinians held in West Bank

A child and former prisoners were among the detainees in the raids that targeted several cities

Ramallah, Palestine - The Israeli army rounded up at least 30 more Palestinians in fresh military raids in the occupied West Bank, according to prisoners' affairs groups on Wednesday.

A child and former prisoners were among the detainees in the raids that targeted East Jerusalem, Hebron, Tubas, Tulkarem, Qalqilya, Nablus, and Ramallah, the Commission of Detainees' Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoner Society said in a joint statement.

The Israeli army conducted field interrogations with dozens of Palestinians in several towns and refugee camps across the West Bank, the statement said.

On January 21, the Israeli army launched an assault on Jenin city and its refugee camp that was later expanded to the city of Tulkarem, where dozens of Palestinians' homes were detonated, displacing thousands of people. And on Sunday, the army



Israel's military operation in the northern occupied West Bank has displaced 5,000 Palestinian families since January 21, according to Palestinian data released on Tuesday

The new arrests brought the number of Palestinians detained by the Israeli army in the West Bank since October 2023 to over 14,300, including those who were released after being arrested, according to Palestinian figures on Wednesday

extended its offensive to the town of Tammun and Al-Far'a refugee camp in Tubas city in the northern West Bank.

The new arrests brought the number of Palestinians detained by the Israeli army in the West Bank since October 2023 to over 14,300, including those who were released after being arrested, according to Palestinian figures.

The figure does not include those arrested from the Gaza Strip, whose numbers are estimated to be in the thousands.

October 7, 2023. Palestinians have also been violently attacked by illegal Israeli settlers.

At least 905 Palestinians have since been killed and over 7,000 others injured by Israeli army fire in the occupied territory, according to the Health Ministry.

In July 2024, the International Court of Justice declared Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestinian land illegal and demanded the evacuation of all ex-

isting settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The Israeli army's offensive in the occupied northern West Bank entered its 16th day on Wednesday as troops continued raids on Palestinian homes.

5,000 families displaced

Israel's military operation in the northern occupied West Bank has displaced 5,000 Palestinian families since January 21, according to Palestinian data released on Tuesday.

The Palestinian prime minister's office issued a statement following a meeting in Ramallah, chaired by Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa and attended by representatives from government agencies handling emergency response efforts.

The statement said the meeting focused on 'intensifying joint efforts to enhance humanitarian interventions in northern West Bank areas (affected by the Israeli assault)'. The Israeli operation has forced the displacement of nearly 5,000 families from Jenin and Tulkarem refugee camps.

It highlighted the "escalation of home demolitions and widespread destruction of infrastructure and civilian property (by the Israeli army)", particularly after the offensive expanded to include Al-Far'a refugee camp and the town of Tammun in Tubas Governorate'.

Anadolu Agency

Syria has no plans for federation, autonomous regions, says Turkish FM

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said on Wednesday that the post-Assad Syrian administration has no plans involving either a federation or autonomous regions.

Speaking at Anadolu's Editors' Desk in the capital Ankara, Fidan addressed key regional issues, including Syria's stance on terrorism and security cooperation.

Fidan emphasised the importance of Tuesday's talks between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa, saying the discussions covered key issues such as Syria's reconstruction, border security, and counterterrorism efforts against terrorist groups PKK/YPG and ISIS (Daesh).

"Our number-one expectation from Ahmad al-Sharaa... is to take ownership of the country's



Speaking at Anadolu's Editors' Desk in Ankara, Fidan addressed key regional issues, including Syria's stance on terrorism and security cooperation

problems and resolve them. We expect them to address issues that pose a threat to Turkey and the region.

"We have the same expectations from Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Just as we do not produce threats for our neighbouring countries, we also expect our neighbours not to pose any threats to us under any circumstances. This is our top priority," Fidan said.

He added that Ahmad al-Sharaa's position on the terrorist group PKK/YPG is 'extremely clear' and meets Turkey's security needs. Fidan said Syria would send back or 'eliminate' all PKK terrorists who have come from various countries 'to ensure its national unity'.

US plans to withdraw

Meanwhile, the US Department of Defence is drafting plans to withdraw all US troops from Syria within 30, 60, or 90 days, two US defence officials told NBC News on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the US Department of Defence is drafting plans to withdraw all US troops from Syria within 30, 60, or 90 days

According to the officials, President Donald Trump and officials close to him recently showed interest in withdrawing troops from Syria, prompting the Pentagon to start drafting plans for a complete pullout within 30, 60, or 90 days.

Meanwhile, Trump's newly appointed national security adviser, Mike Waltz, spent on Friday at the US Central Command headquarters in Tampa, Florida

and there, he met with senior military leaders and received briefings on the Middle East, the defence officials said.

A White House official stated that the potential reduction of US forces in Syria was not a subject of the briefings or the purpose of Waltz's visit.

"It's good for NSA Waltz to visit CENTCOM to get a sense of the entire region," the White House official said, noting that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the White House on Tuesday and that Jordan's King Abdullah is scheduled to visit next week. Last week, Trump had said the US 'will make a determination' regarding the troops in Syria following a report that said he intends to withdraw American forces.

Anadolu Agency

Welcome

Shri Aadi Srinivas

MLA & Govt. Whip

Vemulawada Assembly Constituency Legislator on visit to Oman

Best Wishes from:

RAMU SUTRAM

Apex Media

USAID puts staff on leave worldwide

Washington, D.C., US - The US Agency for International Development (USAID) has announced that all its direct hire personnel will be put on administrative leave worldwide, as President Donald Trump's orders to merge the agency with the State Department come into force.

In a statement on its website late on Tuesday, the agency said it was currently putting together a plan, alongside the State Department, to recall USAID personnel stationed abroad within 30 days.

"The Agency will consider case-by-case exceptions and return travel extensions based on personal or family hardship, mobility or safety concerns, or other reasons," the statement read. This would include dependents' school term schedules, medical needs and pregnancy.

The decision to put staff on leave will exclude 'personnel responsible for mission-critical functions, core leadership and specially designated programmes', the statement said.



"Thank you for your service," said the organisation, which has been providing humanitarian assistance worldwide as a form of US soft power since it was established in 1961.

Trump froze foreign aid as soon as he was inaugurated and tasked billionaire Elon Musk, whom he appointed as head of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), with scaling

down USAID.

Musk has called USAID 'a viper's nest of radical-left Marxists who hate America' and has vowed to shut it down.

The agency's website was down during the weekend, and only returned on Tuesday to announce the leaves.

USAID has a workforce of over 10,000, with some two-thirds serving overseas in more

than 60 country and regional missions, as per figures from the Congressional Research Service (CRS).

Meanwhile, the US Senate approved the nomination of Pam Bondi as attorney general on Tuesday.

President Donald Trump's pick was confirmed in a 54-46 vote.

Bondi, the former attorney general of the state of Florida, faced grilling from lawmakers about whether she would maintain the Justice Department's independence if confirmed to the office.

At her confirmation hearing last month, Bondi claimed that during the last four years, the Justice Department has been 'weaponised' to go after Trump.

"If confirmed, I will work to restore confidence and integrity to the Department of Justice - and each of its components. Under my watch, the partisan weaponisation of the Department of Justice will end," she said.

Agencies

INDIA

US plane with deported Indians arrives

A US military aircraft with more than 100 ‘illegal Indian immigrants’ onboard landed in Amritsar

Amritsar, Punjab - A US military aircraft with more than 100 deported Indians onboard landed in the northern state of Punjab, officials and local media said on Wednesday.

The flight, which is the first one bringing illegal Indian immigrants to the country since US President Donald Trump took office, arrived at Punjab's Amritsar city in the afternoon.

The Punjab police said on Tuesday that the deportees will be received in a ‘friendly’ manner and counters have been set up for them at the airport.

Local broadcaster India Today said the plane had 104 individuals onboard, including 25 women.

Officials said each deported Indian national is verified.

State's Minister for Non-Resident Indians (NRI) Affairs Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal said in a statement that many Indians had entered the US with work permits, ‘which later expired, making them illegal’.

The Indian Foreign Ministry has yet to issue a statement on the matter.

Earlier, the US president said that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured him that India ‘will do what’s right’ regarding the deportation of illegal Indian migrants.

Last month, the Indian For-



Local broadcaster India Today said the plane had 104 individuals onboard, including 25 women

eign Ministry said the government ‘would need to do the required verification, including the nationality of the concerned individuals before they are deported to India’.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio also raised the issue of illegal Indian immigrants during his meeting with Indian Foreign

Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in Washington last month.

Around four million Indians live in the US, and President Trump has appointed at least five Indian-Americans to key positions.

Earlier on Tuesday, a US Embassy spokesperson said that

while specific details cannot be shared, the United States is vigorously enforcing its border and immigration laws. The spokesperson emphasised that the actions taken send a ‘clear message that illegal migration is not worth the risk’.

“I have received a number of inquiries on the report of a de-

portation flight to India. I can't share any details on those inquiries, but I can share, on the record, that the United States is vigorously enforcing its border, tightening immigration laws, and removing illegal migrants. These actions send a clear message: illegal migration is not worth the risk,” a US Embassy

spokesperson said.

On January 24, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had stated that it would facilitate the return of Indian nationals ‘overstaying’ or residing without proper documentation in the United States or ‘anywhere in the world’.

While addressing a press briefing in New Delhi, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: “We are against illegal immigration, especially because it is linked to several forms of organised crime.”

to India.”

The deportation has already taken a political turn with the Congress claiming that the US was treating Indian citizens poorly.

“Shocking & shameful! The way the US is deporting Indians - chained like criminals - is inhumane & unacceptable. Why is PM Narendra Modi silent? Where is self-respect? Dr S Jaishankar what are you doing to stop this humiliation of our people? Speak up & act Now,” posted Congress MP Man-

Officials said each deported Indian national is verified. The deportation has already taken a political turn with the Congress claiming that the US was treating Indian citizens poorly

He added: “For Indians not just in the United States, but anywhere in the world, if they are Indian nationals and they are overstaying, or they are in a particular country without proper documentation, we will take them back, provided documents are shared with us so that we can verify their nationality and that they are indeed Indians. If that happens to be the case, we will take things forward and facilitate their return

ickam Tagore.

Meanwhile, CBS News reported that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement is releasing some migrant detainee. This as its detention system has exceeded maximum capacity amid a spike in arrests under President Trump. According to CBS News, space inside detention facilities was at 109% capacity, with the close to 42,000 migrant detainees.

Agencies

Delhi witnesses high-octane battle

New Delhi - A high-octane electoral battle took place in Delhi on Wednesday as voters cast their ballot from early morning to choose the next government in charge of the Indian capital.

The election for 70 assembly seats of Delhi saw the country's political giants locked in a three-way contest.

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), led by anti-corruption crusader Arvind Kejriwal, is fighting anti-incumbency after being in power for a decade.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - which rules in a coalition nationally - is vying for a comeback in Delhi after 27 years.

India's main opposition Congress party - which is part of an alliance with AAP and other opposition parties, formed to challenge Modi's BJP in the 2024 general elections - is pitting itself against AAP and the BJP in Delhi.



Polling official puts a mark with indelible ink on the finger of a voter before casting a vote for the Delhi elections, in New Delhi on Wednesday (ANI)

Polling across the city started at 7am local time (0130 UTC) and concluded at 6pm.

The results will be declared on Saturday.

Intense campaigning

In the weeks leading up to the Assembly elections, parties stepped up their campaigning with roadshows, rallies and

press conferences.

Both Modi and his staunch critic Kejriwal have sought to woo voters with handouts, promising to improve government schools, free electricity and health services, and also a monthly allowance of more than 2,000 rupees (US\$23) to poor women.

“Your vote is not just a button, it is the foundation of your

children's bright future. It is an opportunity to provide good schools, excellent hospitals and a respectable life to every family,” Kejriwal said on the social media platform X as he called on people to vote.

Modi on Wednesday also urged voters to exercise their franchise calling the election a ‘festival of democracy’.

Several political pundits called Congress' campaign lacklustre, but in the last week of the drive the party picked up pace, with scions Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi holding 12 public meetings.

AAP scooped up 62 seats in the last election in 2020 and Kejriwal was elected the chief minister. But the leader has been mired in legal troubles culminating in his arrest in March last year, just a month ahead of the parliamentary elections, on allegations of corrupt allocation of liquor licenses. DW

PM Modi takes holy dip at Maha Kumbh Mela

New Delhi, India - Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday took a dip in Hindu holy waters in the northern city of Prayagraj, which is hosting the Maha Kumbh Mela - the largest gathering of humanity in the world.

Visuals showed Modi stepping into river waters and offering prayers as priests delivered vedic chants over loudspeakers.

The festival, which takes place every 12 years in the state of Uttar Pradesh, witnesses millions of devout Hindus congregating over a period of 45 days at the confluence of the holy rivers Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati to bathe in the water.

Hindus believe that taking a dip in the waters would cleanse their past sins and liberate them from the cycle of rebirth, helping them attain salvation.

According to authorities,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi offers prayers at Triveni Sangam during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela, in Prayagraj on Wednesday (ANI)

some 400mn people are expected to attend the event this year which concludes on February 26.

Modi's visit comes a week after a stampede at the gathering left dozens of people dead.

While official figures put the death toll at 30, opposition lead-

ers have claimed that the numbers are much higher.

They have accused Modi's federal government and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party's government in Uttar Pradesh of hiding numbers and details on the incident. DW

Sweden school shooting death toll climbs to 11

Stockholm, Sweden - The death toll from a shooting in a central Sweden school has risen to 11, with the perpetrator believed to be among the dead, police said on Wednesday. Authorities are yet to confirm the number of injured, with police warning that the death toll could rise, the SVT broadcaster reported.

“We do not have a complete picture at this time regarding the number of injured,” police spokesman Fredrik Svedemyr said.

He added that the situation remains uncertain for those receiving medical treatment.

“Since we also do not have any information about the injury situation for those being

treated in hospital, there is unfortunately a risk that the number will not stop at eleven,” Svedemyr said.

The shooting took place at around 12.33pm local time (1133GMT) on Tuesday, targeting the adult education centre that is located on a campus with other schools at the Campus Risbergsga in Orebro, a city 200km (124 miles) west of Stockholm.

Police noted that authorities believe the perpetrator is among the dead and that officials do not expect further attacks. The police added that the perpetrator acted alone, but the motive for the attack is not yet clear.

Anadolu Agency

DRC calls for withdrawal of M23 rebels from Goma

Johannesburg, SA - The Democratic Republic of Congo called for the withdrawal of M23 rebels as well as Rwandan forces from the eastern city of Goma.

“We need to see concrete action, what really this means is to have the evidence that this is not a cosmetic fix,” Foreign Minister Therese Kayikwamba Wagner told South African broadcaster Newzroom Afrika about the unilateral ceasefire declared by M23 rebels. M23 on Monday declared a ceasefire after two weeks of clashes with the Congolese army for the control of Goma.

According to the UN, over 900 people have been killed in the clashes and 2,880 injured.

“For humanitarian solutions and for humanitarian access to be reestablished first of all, we would need Goma to be demilitarised,” Wagner said, calling for



the M23 rebels and the Rwanda forces to leave immediately.

Wagner said the Rwandan forces and the M23 allegedly cut off water and electricity supply and all access roads leading to

and from Goma.

Rwanda's President Paul Kagame has frequently denied claims that his country supports the M23 rebels. Declining to deny the presence of Rwandan forces

in Goma as claimed by Kinshasa, Kagame told CNN he does ‘not know’ if his country's troops are in Goma, where fighting between the M23 armed group and Congolese soldiers has

Congolese government spokesman Patrick Muyaya called the ceasefire declared by rebels as ‘false communication’

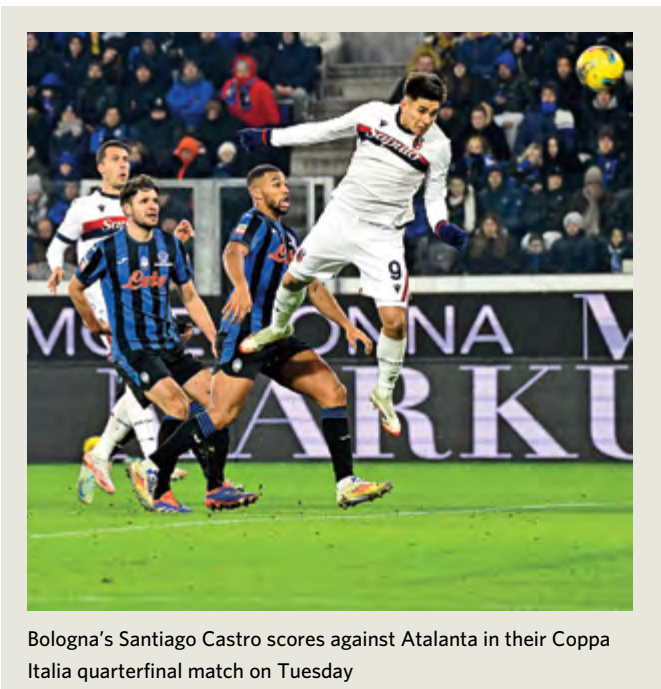
killed hundreds.

M23 claims its fight is driven by grievances about alleged discrimination against Tutsi communities in the region.

Congolese government spokesman Patrick Muyaya on Tuesday called the unilateral ceasefire declared by rebels as ‘false communication’.

But ‘all we are waiting for is the withdrawal of the M23’, said Muyaya.

Anadolu Agency



Bologna's Santiago Castro scores against Atalanta in their Coppa Italia quarterfinal match on Tuesday

Castro goal takes Bologna into Coppa Italia semifinals

Bergamo, Italy - Bologna substitute Santiago Castro scored two minutes after coming on to secure a late 1-0 win at Atalanta on Tuesday, sending them into the semi-finals of the Coppa Italia for the first time in 26 years.

Bologna, who have not won the competition since 1974, will face the winner of the Feb. 26 quarter-final between Juventus and Empoli in the semis.

Hosts Atalanta started well with Charles De Ketelaere getting off an early shot but Bologna keeper Lukasz Skorupski managed to send it out for a corner.

De Ketelaere found Ederson with a cross from the left just before the half-hour mark but the Brazilian's shot was deflected by defender Charalam-

pos Lykogiannis.

Bologna almost took the lead just before the half-time break when Dan Ndoye ran in from the right to set up Tommaso Pobega, but the AC Milan loanee's shot took a deflection off Ederson and went through to keeper Rui Patricio.

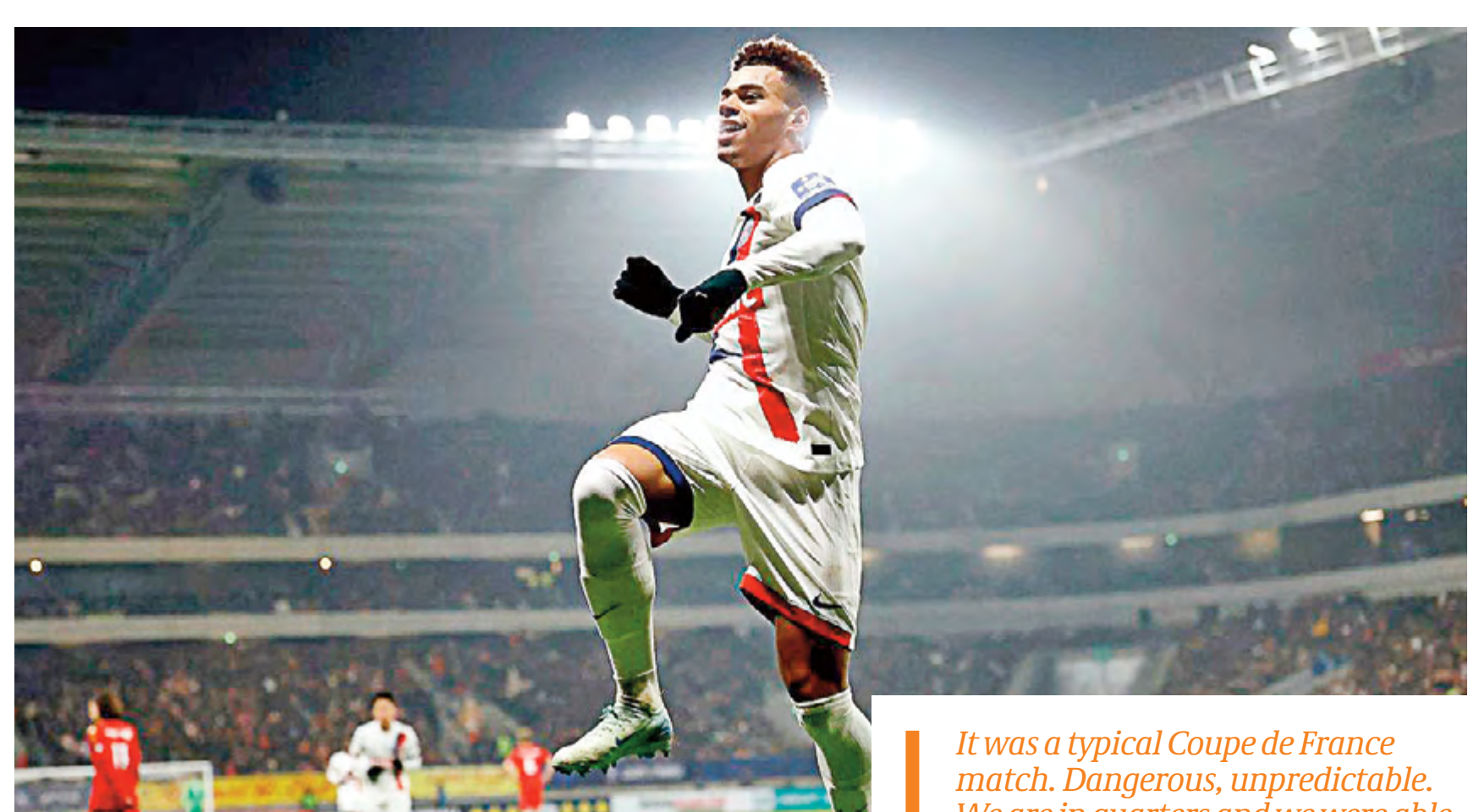
A brilliant save by Skorupski prevented Atalanta from taking the lead in the 51st minute, with the keeper's reflex save keeping out Raoul Bellanova's first-time scorcher from inside the box.

Patricio pulled off an equally good save on the hour mark when Thijs Dallinga found Pobega in the box.

As Pobega went for an angled shot, the Portuguese keeper dived to get a touch on it and avert the danger.

WINGS OF DESIRE

Youngsters Doue, Barcola on target as PSG beat Le Mans to reach French Cup quarters



Paris St Germain's Desire Doue celebrates after scoring against Le Mans in their French Cup match on Tuesday

Le Mans, France - Paris St Germain reached the French Cup quarter-finals on Tuesday, with Desire Doue and Bradley Barcola scoring in each half to earn a 2-0 win at third-tier Le Mans.

"It was a typical Coupe de France match. Dangerous, unpredictable. There are a lot of things you can't control. But I think we did a good job," PSG coach Luis Enrique said.

Elsewhere, second-tier Dunkerque reached the quarters by beating top-flight Lille on penalties after a 1-1 draw while Brest eliminated Ligue 2 side Troyes with a 2-1 win.

Hosts Le Mans almost delivered an early shock against PSG as Gabin Bernardeau found an unmarked Theo Eyoum in the box, but his effort hit the side netting. Le Mans sat back in an effort to frustrate the Ligue 1 leaders, who are unbeaten in all competitions since November, and it took 17 minutes for PSG to have their first shot, which Lee Kang-in put well over the bar from distance.

It was a typical Coupe de France match. Dangerous, unpredictable. We are in quarters and we were able to give the players some minutes and a rest, so we have to be happy

LUIS ENRIQUE

Barcola replaced Doue in the 68th minute and within three minutes he was on the score-sheet as he got hold of a lofted ball from Nuno Mendes, sprinted into the Le Mans box and finished at the near post.

PSG almost scored a third a minute later but Le Mans keeper Ewan Hatfout denied Achraf Hakimi.

Le Mans did not give up, and almost scored just before the 90th minute, but Dame Gueye's acrobatic attempt off Zaid Amir's cross was kept out by an alert Matvey Safonov.

"We are in the quarter-finals and we were able to give the players some minutes and a rest, so we have to be happy," Luis Enrique added.



Tyrell Malacia

PSV sign Man United defender Malacia on loan

PSV Eindhoven have signed Dutch defender Tyrell Malacia on loan from Premier League side Manchester United for the remainder of the season, both clubs said on Tuesday.

Left back Malacia joined United from Feyenoord in 2022 for a deal reportedly worth around 13 million pounds (\$15.56 million) plus another 1.7 million pounds in add-ons.

The 25-year-old made 22 Premier League appearances in his first season, but missed the entirety of the 2023-24 campaign due to a knee injury.

"I'm happy to be here. Finally playing good football again. I am coming off a long injury, but by now I am fit and know that my time will come again," Malacia said in a statement.

"In every tough period there are also positive elements and in this case that is that I have become much stronger physically and mentally.

"I have more patience, I am more mature, know my body better and things like that."

We played for history and we succeeded, says Bologna coach Italiano after win

Bergamo, Italy - Reaching the semi-finals of Coppa Italia for the first time in 26 years was a historic moment for Bologna, coach Vincenzo Italiano said after his side's 1-0 win at Atalanta on Tuesday.

Bologna struggled in their Champions League campaign, crashing out from the league phase with only one win in eight matches.

But Tuesday's victory over a top-three Serie A side would boost the team's confidence, the coach said.

"We played for history and we succeeded," Italiano told reporters.

"This is a beautiful moment, it always pushes you to give your best."

Italiano said winning at Atalanta made the result more special.

"I think it gives you self-esteem and awareness, you can see that there is growth. The



Bologna coach Vincenzo Italiano celebrates their win

Champions League gave us a big hand, this is a group that is constantly growing... it's not easy to play in Bergamo," he added.

Bologna will face the winner of the Feb. 26 quarter-final between Juventus and Empoli in the semis.

"The club had this dream of getting as far as possible in Coppa Italia.

"Right now we have achieved the first goal, now we are waiting for the next opponent," Italiano said.

Thigh injury rules Liverpool's Alexander-Arnold out of Spurs clash

Liverpool, England - Liverpool defender Trent Alexander-Arnold has been ruled out of the second leg of their League Cup semi-final tie against Tottenham Hotspur due to a thigh injury, manager Arne Slot said on Wednesday.

The holders will look to overturn a 1-0 deficit against Spurs at home on Thursday without the right back, who was forced off the pitch in the 70th minute of Saturday's 2-0 Premier League win over Bournemouth.

The 26-year-old has played 31 games across all competitions this season, scoring two goals and registering seven assists.



Trent Alexander-Arnold

"He left the pitch with a bit of a pain in his leg (at Bournemouth). He is already back on the pitch with the rehab

coach so let's see how long it is going to take," Slot told reporters.

"We have to see if he can play Sunday (in the FA Cup fourth round), but he is not available tomorrow."

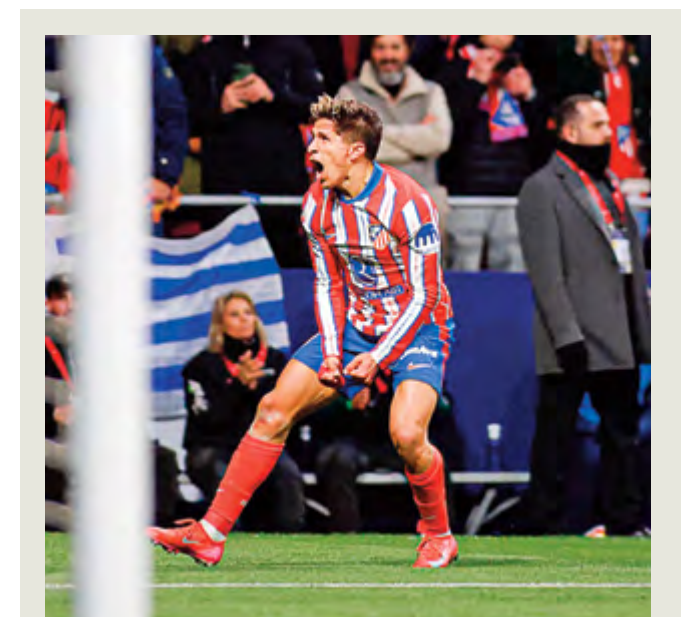
Academy product Conor Bradley is likely to replace the England international and Slot backed the 21-year-old to keep improving, having featured in 18 games in all competitions this season. "He (Bradley) played against Spurs back (in the first leg) too. Every game and session there is something to learn and if not, it wasn't a good session from me," Slot said.

Stuttgart edge Augsburg to reach German Cup semis

Stuttgart, Germany - VfB Stuttgart battled past Augsburg 1-0 in the German Cup thanks to Deniz Undav's first-half goal on Tuesday to book their spot in the semi-finals.

Stuttgart needed time to get a foothold in the contest but they went in front when Germany forward Undav completed a quick break after capitalising on a mis-kick from Augsburg's Frank Onyeka.

Chris Fuehrich came close to adding a second goal for the hosts but his shot rattled the post a minute before the break.



Atletico Madrid's Giuliano Simeone celebrates after scoring against Getafe on Tuesday

Son shine day: Simeone brace helps Atletico thrash Getafe

Madrid, Spain - Atletico Madrid manager Diego Simeone's son Giuliano scored twice in the first half to help them to a resounding 5-0 home win over Getafe in the Copa del Rey quarter-finals on Tuesday.

Simeone opened the scoring after eight minutes with a close-range header from just outside the six-yard box off a Javi Galan cross, before bagging his second with a first-time effort nine minutes later.

Visiting goalkeeper Jiri Letacek denied Samu Lino's attempt from close range with a great save before the half-hour mark, but the Brazilian managed to make it 3-0 in the 42nd minute after cutting inside a defender in the box.

Giuliano thought he had scored a hat-trick after the break, but his 49th-minute goal was ruled out for offside before he left the field to a standing ovation on the hour mark.

"I'm very happy tonight, it's been crazy. I want to thank the team because we've made a huge effort," the Argentine winger told Teledeporte.

"I'm happy for the goals, I think about the things I have to improve day by day, I still have many flaws and details that I want to improve to keep growing."

Substitute Angel Correa then scored with a superb low shot from distance in the 78th minute, before setting up Alexander Sorloth, who also came on in the second half, to seal the rout four minutes from time.

Having secured a spot in the semi-finals for the second consecutive season, Atletico will turn their attention to LaLiga where they face leaders Real Madrid in Saturday's derby. "Today was a very tough game, so we need to rest, prepare well and go for it all on Saturday," the 22-year-old Simeone added.

SASSI GOAL WINS IT FOR AL GHARAF

Doha, Qatar - Qatar's Al Gharafa secured a 1-0 victory over Pakhtakor in Doha on Tuesday to edge closer to a place in the knockout rounds of the Asian Champions League Elite as former champions Al Hilal thrashed Persepolis 4-1 in Riyadh.

Ferjani Sassi scored six minutes before halftime to earn Al Gharafa a win that takes Pedro Martins' side up to seventh in the 12-team standings with one round remaining.

The top eight in both west and east Asia qualify for the round of 16.

Pakhtakor's scoring struggles in the competition continued despite the arrival of new coach Pedro Moreira, with the Uzbeks unable to add to the two goals they had claimed in the previous six matches.

The home side, in contrast, made moves to open the scoring from the first whistle, Joselu lofting an attempt over the crossbar inside the first 50 seconds while Nani's fourth minute header from a Yacine Brahimi corner also cleared the Pakhtakor goal.

Pakhtakor were playing in their first game of the new season and the side from Tashkent were slow to find their rhythm with Brahimi, in particular, causing problems.

The 34-year-old winger was denied by Jhonatan Luiz in the 25th minute, the goalkeeper pushing away a shot across goal and, a little over six minutes remaining in the half, the Algeria international unlocked the visiting defence. Brahimi drove through the heart of the Pakhtakor de-



Al Gharafa's Ferjani Sassi (C) celebrates with Yacine Brahimi (L) and Joselu after scoring against Pakhtakor in Doha on Tuesday

fence to pick up a return pass from Joselu on the edge of the penalty area and found Sassi who slid his strike past Luiz via the inside of the goalkeeper's left post.

Al Gharafa looked to have

doubled their lead in the 64th minute when Brahimi again forced Pakhtakor onto the back foot, his pass releasing Ahmed Al Ganehi and a deflected cross was nodded in by Joselu. But VAR

Our team played two different halves with Pakhtakor today where in the first, we controlled the ball and the game and created many scoring opportunities

PEDRO MARTINS

ruled the goal out on review.

Moreira introduced Ulugbek Khoshimov with 10 minutes remaining but the former Neftchi

striker, like his teammates before him, was unable to find a way through and Al Gharafa comfortably held on to take the points.

UEFA penalises Roma and Frankfurt for crowd trouble

Nyon, Switzerland - Serie A side AS Roma and Bundesliga club Eintracht Frankfurt have been sanctioned for the behaviour of their supporters in a Europa League clash last month, European football's governing body UEFA said on Friday.

Roma secured their place in the tournament's playoffs with a 2-0 home win over Frankfurt, while the visitors still secured a top-eight position despite the loss.

During halftime, there was trouble in the stands with fireworks set off and supporters clashing, but stewards and police got the situation under control, allowing the match to restart without delay.

UEFA reviewed the disturbances and decided to take disciplinary action against both clubs.

Frankfurt were fined 20,000 euros (\$20,826) for the lighting and throwing of fireworks and crowd disturbances, as well as a further 5,000 euros for acts of damage to the stadium.

Roma were fined 30,000 euros and UEFA ordered the partial closure of their stadium during the next UEFA club competition match they host.

Dutch club FC Twente also received a 35,000-euro fine and a partial closure of their stadium for crowd disturbances during their 1-0 win over Turkey's Besiktas.

Jesus lauds Al Hilal's first-half brilliance

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Head coach Jorge Jesus was all smiles after Al Hilal SFC delivered a first-half masterclass to defeat Persepolis 4-1 in their AFC Champions League Elite™ 2024/25 tie at the Kingdom Arena on Tuesday.

The result propelled Al Hilal back to the top of the standings, ahead of Al Ahli Saudi on goal difference with Jesus praising his team's mentality.

"After leading by four goals in the first half, we



Jorge Jesus

started playing at a lower pace in the second half, and there is no team that plays 90 minutes at a high pace except on the PlayStation.

"I remember that since I joined the team, we have only lost three matches. All the players are equally important to me," said Jesus, whose side face UAE's Al Wasi in two weeks to conclude their League Stage campaign.

Persepolis head coach Ismail Kartal admitted his team struggled against Al Hilal's quality, especially in the first half.

Felix moves to Milan on loan

Milan, Italy - AC Milan have signed Portuguese forward Joao Felix from Chelsea on loan for the rest of the season, while Chelsea have brought in French midfielder Mathis Amougou from Saint-Etienne on an eight-year contract, the Premier League club said on Tuesday.

British media reports said Amougou, 19, joined Chelsea for a fee of about 12 million pounds (\$14.98 million).

Felix joined Chelsea from Atletico Madrid in August on a seven-year deal for a reported fee of 46 million pounds (\$57.16 million), but the 25-year-old has struggled for game time in his second spell with the Premier League club.

Since his arrival at Chelsea, Felix has started just three league games despite scoring on his club debut against Wolverhampton Wanderers - his only league goal this season. At Milan, Felix will work with Portuguese coach Sergio Conceicao.

France U-19 international



Joao Felix

Since his arrival at Chelsea, Felix has started just three league games despite scoring on his club debut against Wolverhampton Wanderers

Amougou, who joined Saint-Etienne as a youth player in 2021, has made 17 Serie A appearances for newly-promoted side this season.

"It's an honour for me to sign for such a big club like Chelsea. They believe in young players and the process they have in place to develop us is fantastic," Amougou said in a statement.

Milan are eighth in the Serie A and play AS Roma in the quarter-finals of the Coppa Italia.

Chelsea visit Brighton & Hove Albion for an FA Cup tie on Saturday.



Niko Kovac

New coach Kovac says Dortmund has the quality to bounce back

Dortmund, Germany - Borussia Dortmund's three-game run under interim coach Mike Tullberg with two wins and a draw across all competitions showed the team had the quality to turn their season around, new coach Niko Kovac said on Tuesday.

Kovac took over on Sunday, succeeding Nuri Sahin who was sacked on Jan. 22 following a four-game losing run.

Interim coach Tullberg had taken over for three matches with the team earning a draw and a win in the Bundesliga as well as a victory in the Champions League over Shakhtar Donetsk to end their losing streak.

"What has been positive is the last three games. You could see that the team has the necessary quality. For me, the team is really good," Kovac told a press conference.

"There is a lot that has to do with self-confidence. Yes, there was a phase recently where things did not go well but the last three games were great. Mike really did it well and we all thank him for that."

Dortmund, last season's Champions League finalists, are in 11th spot in the Bundesliga and are at risk of missing out on a place in next season's premier European club competition.

After hosting VfB Stuttgart on Saturday, the Ruhr Valley club

Yes, there was a phase recently where things did not go well but the last three games were great

NICO KOVAC

face Sporting in the Champions League playoff next week for a spot in the last 16.

"The players have seen how sweet it is to win," Kovac said of their matches under Tullberg. "Wins are the ones that lift your confidence. You need that as a player and what was is no longer important. What is and what will be is the most important thing."

Malcolm stars as Al Hilal cruise past Persepolis

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Al Hilal reclaimed the top spot in the West Zone of the AFC Champions League after a 4-1 win against Persepolis FC in their penultimate League Stage match on Tuesday.

Malcom inspired the Saudi Arabian side to victory with a goal and two assists as Al Hilal moved ahead of Al Ahli Saudi FC on goal difference.

As for Persepolis, the defeat saw them drop out of the top eight but the Islamic Republic of Iran side retain a chance of progressing to the knockout stage



Al Hilal's Malcom celebrates his goal against Persepolis on Tuesday

with one round of fixtures to be played.

Persepolis held their own in the opening exchanges at the Kingdom Arena but were undone in the 10th minute by a brilliant Malcom individual goal, his first of the campaign.

Picking the ball up from just inside Al Hilal's half, the attacking midfielder surged forward and with Persepolis players backing off him, the Brazilian ran unchallenged into the box before lifting his shot past the advancing Alexis Guendouz for the opener.

Boosted by the goal, Al Hilal went in search for another and found it in the 25th minute when Joao Cancelo ran onto a Malcom pass just outside the box before smashing in a swerving low shot which Guendouz got a hand to but wasn't strong enough to keep out.

The influential Malcom then earned his second assist, slipping skipper Salem Al Dawsari through in the 39th minute with the Saudi international then evading Guendouz to tuck away from a tight angle.

ISC MKW beat Pakistan School Muscat in women's cricket; MCCC Yellow U11 and BSC AEC U11 register wins

Muscat - ISC Manglorean Konkani Wing (MKW) defeated Pakistan School Muscat Women's by nine wickets in the Women's Cricket League 2024-25.

PSM Women's scored 119/7 in 20 overs thanks mainly to Lujaina Sajid's 27. For ISC MKW, Priyanka Mendonca took three wickets for 10 runs and Pratima B bagged two. In response, ISC MKW's openers Priyanka Mendonca (44 runs) and Trupti Pawde (49) stitched a match-winning 102 run partnership.

Meanwhile, MCCC Yellow U11 defeated MCCC Blue U11 by 248 runs in the U11 Junior Cricket League 2024-25. In another match BSC AEC U11 beat MCCC Red U11 by 246 runs.

BRIEF SCORES:

PSM-W 119/7 in 20 overs (Lujaina Sajid 27(36); Priyanka Mendonca 3/10) lost to ISC MKW 120/1 in 14.5 overs (Trupti Pawde 49(47); Eshal Siddiqui 1/27) by 9 wickets.

MCCC Yellow U11 327/1 in 20 overs (Ashbel Burboz 196(75) - 4x39) beat MCCC Blue U11 79/10 in 18.5 overs (Burhanuddin BM 3/11) by 248 runs.

BSC AEC U11 326/1 in 20 overs (Aarav Chirmure 171(76) - 4x27; Dharvik VS 1/39) beat MCCC Red U11 80/10 in 19.3 overs (Karthik Iyer 10(18) - Shubh Seth 2/7) by 246 runs.

RARING TO GO

Omani trio Al Rawahi, Al Zubair and Al Amri all set for Qatar International Rally

Muscat - Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi, Zakaria al Amri and Abdullah al Zubair will be fighting for honours in the second round of the Middle East Rally Championship will begin this weekend in Qatar.

After the first leg of the championship in Sohar won by Qatar's Nasser al Attiyah, Al Rawahi occupies eighth place in the overall championship standings. Al Zubair leads the MERC2 group with 30 points, while Al Amri has 24 points.

Al Rawahi hopes to return to the podiums this time in Qatar after he was forced to withdraw from the first day of the rally in Sohar. He was able to enter the rally on the second day via the Super Rally and achieved the fastest time in four of the six stages the next day.

Al Amri also faced problems with his car from the first day, especially in the turbo system.

He said, "We have complete knowledge of the Qatar Rally and its stages. There are some differences in the stages and some difficulty in navigation, but our goal is to win the category so that we can go to the third round in Saudi Arabia, and we are at the top of our category. I have a good and well-known navigator, Mohammed al



Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi (above), Zakaria al Amri (below) and Abdullah al Zubair are ready to rumble at the Qatar International Rally



Mazroui, and we have previously competed in many races together.

"We wish success to everyone. We say thank you to all who supported us in the championship".

Al Rawahi said he wanted to win in his country's rally, but circumstances forced him out on day one of the competition.

Al Rawahi said: "For Qatar rally, it is more difficult for us than the local drivers. They are more familiar to the type of stages, for example, Nasser Al Attiyah and other locals, they enter and exit stages their own ways, you have to take careful notes of the stages."



Ons Jabeur

Jabeur reaches Abu Dhabi quarters

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Ons Jabeur of Tunisia moved into the quarterfinals of the WTA 500 Mubadala Abu Dhabi Open by holding off fast-rising 17-year-old qualifier Wakana Sonobe of Japan 6-3, 6-3 on Wednesday.

"It was definitely a great match for me," Jabeur said afterwards. "Always tough playing young players, lefty ones, it's always tricky. I'm glad that I pulled [out] the win in two sets."

On Tuesday, No. 6 seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia needed just 59 minutes to oust American Sofia Kenin 6-3, 6-1

Pavlyuchenkova won an overwhelming 80 percent of her service points, including 23 of 25 on her first serve. He never faced break point while breaking Kenin's serve four times in eight chances.

Eighth seed Leylah Fernandez of Canada outlasted Japan's Moyuka Uchijima 7-6 (3), 7-6 (0).

Meanwhile in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, the top two seeds, Russia's Anastasia Potapova and Serbia's Olga Danilovic, notched straight-sets victories.



Anthony Davis

Anthony Davis 'getting ready to play with Dallas'

Philadelphia, US - Anthony Davis admitted he was just like everybody else upon hearing the news that he had been traded from the Los Angeles Lakers and that he was "shocked" over his blockbuster deal to the Dallas Mavericks.

Davis wasn't even with his then-Los Angeles teammates at the time of the trade. He actually just finished watching the Lakers upset the Knicks in New York on television.

Back in Los Angeles, Davis received a call from Lakers general manager Rob Pelinka and head coach JJ Redick and was informed that he was being traded in a deal that included Luka Doncic.

"I was shocked. I had no idea," Davis said after the Mavericks held their morning shootaround on Tuesday ahead of their game against the host Philadelphia 76ers.

"I had just sent the team a

text about congratulations on the win against the Knicks, big win, and then looking forward to Tuesday's game against the Clippers, as far as standing purposes.

"And then, found out like an hour later I was no longer with the team. I was in shock, obviously. Had no idea that it was happening.

"But, I mean, now I'm kind of over it, and just kind of getting ready to play with Dallas."

Davis, who is nursing an abdominal strain, will not join his new teammates in their game against the 76ers.

The 31-year-old Davis has put up averages of 25.7 points, 11.9 boards, 3.4 assists and 2.1 block shots across 42 games (all starts) during the 2024-25 campaign.

He is a 10-time All-Star (including this season), five-time All-NBA selection and five-time All-Defensive Team selection.

Simona Halep announces retirement

Cluj, Romania - Former world number one and two-time Grand Slam winner Simona Halep announced her retirement from professional tennis on Tuesday after losing in the first round at her home event in Cluj.

Halep, whose career stalled due to a doping ban that was reduced on appeal last year, lost 6-1 6-1 to Italy's Lucia Bronzetti in her first match in 2025 before announcing her decision.

The 33-year-old Romanian had delayed the start of her season due to pain in her knee and shoulder.

"I don't know if it's with sadness or joy, I think I feel both, but I make this decision with my soul at peace, I have always been realistic with myself," Halep told the crowd at the BT Arena. "My body cannot take as much so as to get back where I once was, it is very difficult to get there and I know what it



Simona Halep celebrates after winning the Wimbledon title in 2019

means to get there. That is why I wanted to come to Cluj today to play before you and to say goodbye on the tennis court.

"Who knows whether I will return but at the moment it is for

the last time that I play here. I don't want to cry, it is a beautiful thing, I became world number one, I won Grand Slams, it is everything I ever wanted. Life moves on, there is life after tennis too."

Halep lost in three Grand Slam finals before finally clinching her first major at the French Open in 2018 and went on to win Wimbledon the following year.

She was provisionally suspended in October 2022 after she tested positive for roxadustat - a banned drug that stimulates the production of red blood cells - at the U.S. Open that year.

She was later banned for four years, a period which was cut to nine months last March following an appeal at the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

"Being away from the court in this period, I realised how hard the last 15 years were, working every day, no matter how you feel, you must push yourself to the max," Halep, who won 24 WTA titles, later told a press conference.

"Perhaps life also means something else. I understood that in this period, and I want to enjoy what I am living now. I have done a lot in tennis. I am at peace, content with what I did, and I feel the time has come to look in another direction."

Doncic shocked, but 'excited about this new journey'

Los Angeles, US - Luka Doncic said on Tuesday he was as shocked as anyone by the blockbuster trade over the weekend that brought him to the Los Angeles Lakers but is excited to join forces with LeBron James in a move that could shape the franchise for years to come.

The 25-year-old Slovenian guard and perennial MVP contender admitted he figured he would spend his entire NBA career with the Dallas Mavericks, which made the news of his trade all the more surprising.

"I was almost asleep when I got the call, I had to check (if) it was April 1st. I didn't really believe it at first. It was a big shock. It was hard a moment for me," said Doncic. "(Dallas) was home so it was a really hard moment for me, especially the first day, but as I said I get to play in the greatest club in the



Luka Doncic

world and I am excited about this new journey."

Doncic, who has not played since Christmas Day, because of a calf strain but is considered close to returning, had been with Dallas ever since a draft-night trade with the Atlanta Hawks, who took him with the third overall pick in 2018.

Last year, the five-times All-Star reached the NBA Finals for the first time in his career.

Now Doncic, who was wildly popular in Dallas, will chase a title alongside the NBA's all-time top scorer in James, who he said was quick to reach out when the trade was announced.

"He called me right away," Doncic said of his new teammate. "We didn't talk much because he said I understand what you are feeling, but that was really nice of him just to call me right away and welcome me to LA."



14

WINTY WARMERS
Churn out your favourite soups in minutes and enjoy time on the couch



IN TOWN
67th Republic Day of India celebrations hosted by Embassy of India

HOPIBI'S 'BIG H'
If you care for the environment, follow the advice of Hopibi

15



HERITAGE

Legacy afloat

SUWAIQ RESIDENT **SALIM AL BALUSHI** KEEPS ALIVE THE TIMELESS CRAFT OF MAKING 'AL SHASHA' PALM FROND BOATS

Mohammed Taha

In the serene coastal town of Suwaiq in North Batinah, where whispers from the Arabian Sea jostle with rustling palms, 60-year-old Salim Jameel Al Balushi keeps alive an ancient tradition that has literally weathered the tides of time.

For over four decades, Balushi has dedicated his life to the meticulous craft of constructing traditional Omani boats - known as Al Shasha - a skill he proudly inherited from his forefathers and now passes on to his children.

"I have been in this profession for more than forty years. I inherited this skill from my forefathers, and now, I have been teaching the same to my children," Balushi said proudly, showing his hands, roughened up by years of labour, yet steady with the precision of a master craftsman.

Al Shasha is a small traditional fishing boat crafted entirely from the stalks of date palm fronds. Every part of the boat, from its sturdy hull to the binding ropes, is sourced from palm trees - a symbol of sustainability and resilience in Omani culture.

Balushi's boats range from 2m to 10m in length, and are capable of accommodating one to four people.

The process begins with soaking palm fronds in water for 15 days, making them pliable for shaping. Once softened, the fronds are meticulously cleaned, and using traditional hand tools, he creates a wooden frame, binding it with ropes made from coir to reinforce it.

The base of the boat's body is stuffed with

additional fronds, to enhance buoyancy and stability which is crucial for navigating Oman's coastal waters.

"The base of the boat is stuffed with palm fronds, which makes it float well on water. It is also an 'anti-sinking' technique," Balushi explained, adding, "This provides balance and stability to the boat while out at sea." Remarkably, each boat takes just three to five days to be constructed, a testament to his expertise and dedication.

Legacy without blueprints

Unlike modern shipbuilding, Balushi relies solely on inherited knowledge, crafting each vessel without any sketches or blueprints. "All the plans for construction are in here," he said, tapping at his own head with a smile that indicated speaks of pride and nostalgia.

His passion extends beyond crafting functional fishing boats. Balushi also creates miniature models to teach his grandchildren about Oman's rich maritime heritage, ensuring the younger generation remains connected to their roots.

Balushi actively participates in cultural festivals, showcasing his boats and traditional fishing equipment, including

hand-made nets and fish cages. His mission is clear: to revive Oman's maritime traditions and protect them from fading into obscurity.

"This profession teaches us patience, precision, and endurance," he noted, reflecting on the virtues embedded in the craft. Balushi urges young Omanis to embrace this heritage, not only as a means of livelihood but also as a means of preserving a cultural identity shaped by the sea.

"I hope the rhythm of the waves, which has been music for my ears for decades, will forever carry the story of Shasha boats for generations to come," he said.



This profession teaches us patience, precision, and endurance. I hope the rhythm of the waves, which has been music for my ears for decades, will forever carry the story of Shasha boats for generations to come



cook-up

French Onion Soup

- Ingredients
- 3 onions – sliced fine
 - 2 bouillon cubes
 - 1tsp butter
 - 2tbsp oil
 - 1litre water

Method

Fry the sliced onions in oil till golden brown and set aside. Boil the water with 2 bouillon cubes. Switch off the flame, add the fried onions to the boiled bouillon water. Top with 1tsp butter and serve hot.

Beef bone broth

- Ingredients
- 1kg beef bones
 - 1tsp salt
 - 3-4 garlic cloves
 - 1tsp julienned ginger
 - 1tbsp chopped coriander
 - 1tsp crushed black pepper

Method

Boil the bones in a pressure cooker, with four glasses of water, garlic cloves, ginger and salt for 30 minutes. Remove from fire, strain the broth and serve piping hot into soup bowls garnished with chopped coriander and a dash of crushed pepper. (Tip: Reserve meat broth in advance and use for a quick soup.)



When you just want to curl up on the couch for a few hours of television during wintry evenings, keep a huge bowl of your favourite soup at hand. Try these soups, churned out in just minutes



Carrot Soup

- Ingredients
- 500g carrots /carrot puree
 - 1 seasoning cube (veg/chicken)
 - 1tbsp butter
 - 1tbsp fresh cream
 - Pepper powder, to taste

Method

Cut the carrots into thick slices and simmer in a pan, with a dash of butter, for 3-4 minutes, then blend with one cup water into a smooth flowy liquid. Alternatively, use carrot puree, which can be simmered for just 2-3 minutes.

Add the butter and the seasoning cube and mix well. Serve with a sprinkle of pepper powder/dried parsley and a dollop of cream.

Leek and Potato Soup

- Ingredients
- 2 medium leeks - chopped and washed
 - 2 potatoes – boiled
 - 1 green chilli
 - ½ tsp salt
 - 1tsp butter

Method

Saute the chopped leeks in a pan on medium heat with 1tsp butter. Remove, cool and blend to a smooth puree along with the boiled potatoes and 2 cups of water. Simmer the mixture for 3-4 minutes with one green chilli and salt. Serve hot, with a dollop of butter or fresh cream, if required.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

German National (Male, 31), multi-talented and fast learner, with technical background is looking for any suitable position to improve his intermediate English. Six years experience at ALDI, one of the largest supermarket chains in Germany as Replenishment Dispatcher for around 120 branches. Available in Muscat till Jan 30 with one year multiple-entry visa to Oman. Contact Number: 96756864

Looking for Immediate Job opportunity in Accounts. I am Shoaib Shaikh, with 2.5 years of experience in Accounts, specializing in bank reconciliation, accounts payable, and receivable. Additionally, I have 6 months of experience in the travel industry in Muscat. I am available to join immediately and seeking a position with a salary expectation of RO450-550. For more details, contact: 93267786

MATRIMONIAL ALLIANCE:

Well settled Mangalorean RC family from Udupi seeks suitable alliance for their son, 34 years, working in a good position in Muscat. Please reply to + 968 94673888 or email stanley411@gmail.com"

Senior Accountant BCOM, MBA-Finance | 11+ years experience (9 years in Oman) NOC & D/L available.Contact Number: 78109909 | shinsjohn@gmail.com

Indian male graduate with 14 years of Sales & Marketing experience looking for suitable position with valid D/L. Ready to join immediately. Contact : 95136784

SEND YOUR REQUEST FOR Birthday/ Anniversary wishes to wish@apexmedia.co.om with your resident card copy (It's free of cost)

FOR LEASE

STAFF ACCOMMODATION CAMP

Prime 6000 Sq. Mts. Semi Furnished Staff Accomodation Camp available for lease in Ghala Industrial Zone, with direct road access. The camp features porta-cabins with Junior & Senior rooms, kitchen, dining area, recreation rooms, storage, and ample open space. Ideal for short or long-term leasing.

For inquiries or to arrange a site visit, please contact: 9550 1871, 9670 4540 | support@nadafaoman.com

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Yoga, Kalari, Panchakarma, Massage, Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Beauty therapy & post Delivery Care

Zaher Building ,1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road ,near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-king Tel:24475280, GSM: 95371664 , 92504980 , Website:www.siddhayur.com



WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease



ASPHALT LAYING & CABC CREW WITH MACHINERY AVAILABLE

ON DAILY / LONG TERM RENTAL BASIS

Laying Crew consist of the below.
Asphalt Paving machine 6/12 meters – 1 No's each
PTR Roller – 3 No's
Tandem Roller – 2 No's
Bitumen Sprayer – 2 No's
Crew & Operator
in case of long term rental period can be upgraded to OPAL standard.

To contact: 99660581

LOST PASSPORT

Name: **DR MUHAMMAD ABDULKADER OMAR**
Tanzanian Passport holder: **TAE229843**
Date of issue: **04.Nov.2019**
Date of expiry: **03.Nov.2029**
Place of Issue: **PCO. DAR ES SALAAM**
If found kindly contact: **97630076**
or send it to the Embassy of United Republic of Tanzania Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

BIRTHDAY WISHES

SARANYA SRIRAM
FEBRUARY 8

"My Love, you are the most beautiful gift that life has given me. On your special day, I promise to cherish and love you forever" - Advance birthday wishes from family & friends!



CLASSIFIED LISTINGS

MUSCAT DAILY offers a variety of classified listings for individuals and establishments: Situations Vacant/Wanted, Accommodation Wanted or Available, Sale of Household Items, Cars for Sale or Wanted, Matrimonial Alliances, etc

Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call: 99104346



take a break

HOPPING AROUND WITH HOPIBI



I'm going in for the 'Big H'

Fed up of hitching rides from passing automobiles in town, I decided to get one of my own.

Then my refined conscience ushered itself in and began to send me in a tizzy.

"Are you going to add to the pollution in town by bringing one more vehicle on the road? Have you forgotten that you are on a mission to preserve the environment and save it for future generations?" my conscience served that to me, without mincing any words.

Hmmm, I thought, wondering how to trick the old fella and beat him to his own game. I knew he was playing the environment card to change my mind.

Then it dawned upon me, almost instantly and I



hit back with a wink.

How about an electric vehicle, I thought, these are safer for the environment. But then, confusion found its way again into this argument. I remember reading that electric vehicles pose the danger of one getting electrocuted.

Also, with over 1 million

EVs on the roads of the UK, people are still skeptical about the safety of drivers, and pedestrians. And, at lower speeds, EVs pose even more danger to pedestrians as the reduced noise can catch them offguard.

No, I can't go for an electric car! After all, I, too, have been a pedestrian all these

years. An eerie silence then prevailed for some time and, I wondered if my conscience was taking 40 winks.

Sensing the opportunity, I then pulled out a trump card, what I'd call 'the Big H' of the automobile world. Did you guess, too?

Hybrid is the word!

So, I'm going in for a hybrid vehicle that offers limited use of fuel and electricity, interchangeably. Besides, these have lower operating costs, greater efficiency, charging flexibility, a longer lifespan, and, above all, these sit well in a country's sustainability goals

I did hear a snore (from Mr conscience) - surely he had heard me but did not want to be procalimed as beaten. Zzzzz zzzzz!

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

For once, it's really tough to say how you might react to what comes your way at the moment. Ordinarily, your loved ones would have absolutely no problem figuring that out. They might even be able to recite something uncannily close to your answer. But now?



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You've felt this coming for a while now. Certain family members have been smiling smugly, tossing knowing glances around and exchanging meaningful winks. Now, if anyone loves secrets, it's you, but only when you've been let in on it. Beg if you have to. Something is going on and you deserve to know about it.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Heaven helps anyone who tries to come between you and what you absolutely must get off of your chest at the moment. One look should shut them up, and probably send them retreating to the corner with their tail between their legs. But if that doesn't work, try a few well-placed words. The truthful kind.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Secrets are in the air at the moment for one and all. It may be particularly tough to keep quiet, however, because the secret you want to share is a happy one. Still, you've been sworn to silence. There's only one thing to do: beg them to let you out of your promise, swear that you'll only talk about it with your best friend, and do just that.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You can come out now, and you can stop worrying too. You've been dealing with an internal tug-of-war for days and trying to decide whether to choose the responsible or fun thing to do. Well, if you're clever, you can do both. And who said you aren't clever? Be diligent during the day (work a little bit longer if you have to).



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Ready to take this relationship one giant step closer toward intimacy? True intimacy? Bet you are. Bet they are too. So get busy and forget about it being a school night. Plan on being up late for only the most delightful reasons. If you're tired tomorrow, you can always take a nap. Or call in sick. This is the right time to indulge in what you have been keeping under wraps for long.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You have every right to voice your opinion, especially if you think a friend's new love interest isn't good enough for them. But remember that if you do, you're treading in some dangerous territory. Reconsider. It might be best to let this fling just run its course. By butting into other people's love lives, you run the risk of alienating them and losing favour with them.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Surprises could be coming to you via your career and the people involved in it. This could mean the higher-ups have been less than forthright about your situation or something they promised. The chances of that happening, however, are slim. What's more likely is that someone in a position of authority has been working on your behalf.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Today might be a little tricky when it comes to communication and travel. Now that you know what you're dealing with, it's up to you to plan for it. If the past few days have been a struggle, and you don't want an instant replay of the disorganization, troubleshoot. Be sure you have an alternative arrangement for every plan.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Feeling restless? Feeling like you need to expand your horizons a bit by getting to know some new friends? Well, you're right on track, and the Universe is only too happy to help. When an invitation arrives, and it will, probably sooner rather than later, you should jump right on it, and greet your new peer group.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Just when you think you have everything under control, a surprise will land in your life and take you out of the action. The good news is that this wonderful surprise proves someone is thinking about you. Let yourself get sidetracked down this happy path and leave your old routine behind. Things will go along just as well without you. You need to capitalise on this excitement and make the most of it.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Sharing your life with someone is a choice. Friends and partners have always provided you with the support you need, but now someone could be morphing from supporter to controller. Look at your social calendar. Who's been setting the agenda? Before things get out of hand, start flex your muscles and make your own choices. If you get some attitude about it, slowly phase this person out of your plans. Life's too short to not live on your own terms.

IN TOWN

India's 76th Republic Day



The Embassy of India celebrated the 76th Republic Day of India at the embassy lawns on January 26



Photos: V.K. Shaefer

BOGGLER

E	T	R	N
J	O	A	S
K	E	R	E
S	C	R	S

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY:

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

		8				9	7	
6	4		3		9		1	
			7				5	4
		6			4			
9		2	6		7	5		8
			5			2		
4	2				5			
	6		2		1		3	9
	8	9				7		

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

6	2	7	9	8	4	6	8	1
5	8	4	1	8	2	9	7	3
1	8	9	5	7	6	8	2	4
7	9	2	8	6	9	4	1	8
8	6	4	1	7	1	9	2	8
3	6	4	1	9	3	5	7	6
6	7	1	6	8	3	5	4	2
4	7	3	5	9	6	8	1	2
2	9	7	6	2	4	1	5	3

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS

1. Who invented the first gasoline automobile?

- A. Karl Benz
- B. Henry Ford
- C. George Baldwin
- D. Robert Anderson

2. What is the meaning of Althing?

- A. Ancient species of potato
- B. Supreme parliament of Iceland
- C. Outer shell of a rocket
- D. Tusk of an African elephant

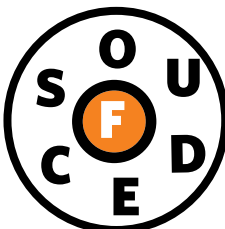
3. When was the extinct Arabian Oryx reintroduced in Oman?



- A. 1970
- B. 1980
- C. 1982
- D. 1992

Answers
1. A
2. B
3. C

WORD BUILDER



You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

ليالي مسقط
MUSCAT NIGHTS



بلدية
مسقط

محافظة مسقط

نتوجه بخالص الشكر والتقدير لجميع شركاء النجاح في ليالي مسقط

We sincerely thank all our partners for their contribution to the success of Muscat Night

Government & Private Entities

الجهات الحكومية والخاصة



وزارة الإعلام
Ministry of Information



وزارة الثقافة والرياضة والشباب
Ministry of Culture, Sports, & Youth



شؤون البلاط السلطاني
Royal Court Affairs



وزارة المالية
Ministry of Finance



وزارة الخارجية
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



وزارة الداخلية
Ministry of Interior



ديوان البلاط السلطاني
Diwan of Royal Court



الأمانة العامة للاحتفالات الوطنية
General Secretariat for National Celebrations



وزارة الصحة
Ministry of Health



وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية
Ministry of Social Development



وزارة التجارة والصناعة وترويج الإستثمار
Ministry of Commerce, Industry, & Investment Promotion



وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage & Tourism



وزارة العمل
Ministry of Labor



غرفة تجارة وصناعة عمان
Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry



هيئة الدفاع المدني والإسعاف
Civil Defense & Ambulance Authority



الهيئة العامة للطيران المدني
Public Authority for Civil Aviation



هيئة تنمية المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة
Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority



الأمانة العامة لمجلس المناقصات
General Secretariat of the Tender Board



اللجنة العمانية للبياردو والسنوكر
Oman Billiard & Snooker Committee



اللجنة العمانية للشطرنج
Oman Chess Committee



اللجنة العمانية للبولينج
Oman Bowling Committee



الجمعية العمانية للسيارات
Oman Automobile Association



الاتحاد العماني للفروسية
Oman Equestrian Federation



مطارات عمان
Oman Airports

Embassies

السفارات



السفارة المصرية
Egyptian Embassy



السفارة اللبنانية
Lebanese Embassy



السفارة السورية
Syrian Embassy



السفارة السودانية
Sudanese Embassy



السفارة التونسية
Tunisian Embassy



السفارة الأردنية
Jordanian Embassy



السفارة اليابانية
Japanese Embassy



السفارة الهندية
Indian Embassy



السفارة السريلانكية
Sri Lankan Embassy



السفارة التanzانية
Tanzanian Embassy



السفارة الباكستانية
Pakistani Embassy



السفارة الإيرانية
Iranian Embassy

Media Entities

الجهات الإعلامية



قناة نبض الشباب
Nabd Al-Shabab Channel



إذاعة الشبيبة
Al-Shabiba Radio



إذاعة الوصال
Al-Wisal Radio



إذاعة مسقط
Muscat Radio



إذاعة هلا إف إم
Hala FM Radio



صحيفة أثير الإلكترونية
Atheer Electronic Newspaper



جريدة الوطن
Al-Watan Newspaper



مسقط ديلي
Muscat Daily



تايمز أوف عمان
Times of Oman



جريدة الشبيبة
Al-Shabiba Newspaper



جريدة الرؤية
Al-Ruya Newspaper

The Sponsors

الجهات الراعية

Gold Partner الشريك الذهبي



مركز تجاري مسقط
MUSCAT GRAND MALL



مجموعة مستشفيات ومستوصفات بدر السمان
BADR AL SAMAA



عمان أفينيو مول
OMAN AVENUES MALL



عمان أفينيو مول
Ooredoo

Participating Partner الشريك المشارك



زوار عمان
Oman Visitors



مول عمان
Mall of Oman



سلاطين سينتر
Sultan's Palace



للترفيه هاترا
Hottrah Teleferik



أستر
Aster



للتنشيطات
ASH



الاراجمي بوليفارد
AL ARAJMI BOULEVARD

Supporting Partner الشريك المساند



العريق
Al Aqia



جيت ستيج تيك
GT StageTech



العريق
Al Aqia



العريق
Al Aqia



العريق
Al Aqia



العريق
Al Aqia



العريق
Al Aqia

Main Partner الشريك الرئيسي



عمانتل
Omantel

Diamond Partner الشريك الماسي



مباشير
mubashir

JCDecaux Oman

JCDecaux Oman

مسقط

